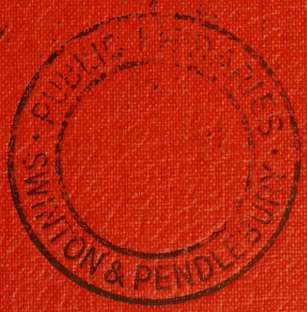
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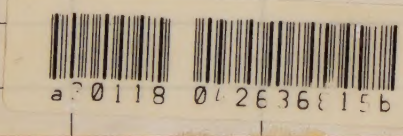

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OLD MISS

A Novel

BY

BOWYER CAMPBELL

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1930

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London

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CHAPTER I

SPRINGTIME; April evening after rain. So fresh the delicate green of grass and trees, and the slanting rays of the setting sun are weighty with moisture. The white chickens and the commoner dominicas are proceeding up the ladders to their roosting-place in the mulberry trees. Black Lizzie in the kitchen is singing amidst the clatter of her pots and pans. Small William is turning the spitted fowls, over and over, round and round. The hearth is white and red with the glowing coals.

In the house, with nose pressed closely against window-pane, little Charlotte Steppleton watches the stretch of the avenue of maples from the door to the distant carriage gate. Uncle Jemmy is coming. From the Valley. He will ride down the avenue at a gallop, hallooing, waving his whip, slapping the saddle-bags. Charlotte is watching.

"Will he come before candlelight, Ma? Will he be late for supper? What will he bring me from over the mountains?"

Surely before candlelight. The sun is not yet down. It is still at least a yard above the ridge of the distant mountains. A turkey hen with her brood parades solemnly down the drive.

"Out of the way, Lucinda! Uncle Jemmy Steppleton will ride over you. He is coming any minute." Charlotte claps her hands and waves signals of alarm to the turkey family. But the lofty-minded mother-fowl heeds her not. Charlotte twists herself about on the window-seat. "If we light the candles now, Ma, will that make him come any sooner?"

Mrs. Steppleton puts by her knitting. "He will come in good time," she says. "We do not need candles just yet. Let's have a little blindman's holiday now."

"He is coming, Ma! He's coming!" Charlotte flies to the door.

Several little negroes from the quarters hear the thud of the hoofbeats. They scamper across the grass to swing open the big gates. But the rider is there first. He disdains the closed gates. Halloo, halloo; over he comes, vaulting the high spikes, dashing down the avenue.

Charlotte is in his arms. He kisses his sister-in-law. Bowleg Nick comes up from the stable. He leads away the horse. A black youth with two rows of magnificent white teeth carries the saddle-bags into the house. The maids begin to light the candles, in the hall, in the parlour, in the dining-room. "Hurry up wid supper. Marse Jeems done come."

"Where's your pa? Where's Ned?" asks Uncle Jemmy.

"He rode over to Swan Creek to see Captain Bassett," says Charlotte's mother. "He may be a little late getting home."

Into the parlour they go. The fire-boy is heaping up fresh logs on the coals. The fire begins to crackle and blaze up. The red light dances on walls and polished furniture. James Steppleton's body-servant comes to take away his boots. Charlotte kneels at his feet with his slippers.

"What do you think, Lotty! I passed Indians on the stage-road. Look out to-morrow. You will see them pass; Indian file, going to Washington to get their papers and money. They have come all the way from the Valley of Virginia. Once they lived on this side of the mountains, right here where this house stands. All beyond the mountains now, and going farther, going

west. See, here are some beads I got from a squaw for you."

Dear, darling Uncle Jemmy. Always something wonderful to tell, something wonderful and beautiful to show. Beads, red, blue, green, worked in a simple pattern. Charlotte gives Uncle Jemmy another kiss for thank-you. At supper how he will talk—stories, jokes! And he will ride Lotty on his foot, toss her high above his head, she screaming with joy, and at last carry her upon his shoulder triumphantly to bed. She will tumble, shouting with laughter, from his high shoulder into the squashy feather bed. Mammy will be there to cackle with laughter at her fall.

Dark outside. The dogs bark. It is a horseman riding down the avenue. Ned Steppleton home again. He swings himself to the ground, flings the reins to Bowleg Nick, and tramps into the house, spurs rattling.

James jumps to his feet. "Ah, here's Ned! How are you, Brother?"

"Well, Jeems? How are you? Did you ride far to-day?"

"Only from Botetourt County. I stayed the night at Mr. Rayfield's. I was in Montgomery County the day before yesterday. There was trouble with the Indians there. They are moving west, but they steal and quarrel with the settlers. It's a wild country, Montgomery County. Last week Tony Lester's children were playing on a large haystack. Under the stack Indians were hiding. Doubtless intending to come out at night to pilfer about the place . . . horses or cattle, perhaps. Lester's twelve-year-old boy saw them. He behaved like a man. No panic. He left his sisters sliding on the hay. He slipped off to tell his father. Tony put him on a horse and the lad rode twenty-five miles calling for help at the various homesteads."

"Jem, you alarm me!" exclaims Mrs. Steppleton.

"Surely the Indians will not trouble the county families?"

"Not here. This is east of the mountains. But beyond the Blue Ridge there is little law or order. The settlers must look out for themselves. The Indians are on the move. They are not really dangerous, but they could be most annoying on isolated plantations."

Supper. Charlotte is allowed to sit up to-night in honour of her uncle's visit. She grasps one of his hands and one of her father's. They go into the dining-room. Roast chicken, cold ham, hot rolls, biscuits, and waffles. In the centre of the table is the large silver bowl of fresh milk. Mrs. Steppleton ladles it out into the silver barrel-cups. Charlotte has hers in a porringer, and cold bread crumbled in it.

Uncle Jemmy talks about the Indians. He gives news of the families living in the Valley and beyond the mountains. Charlotte strives to listen, but she is sleepy before the meal is half over. Far past her usual bedtime. Her mammy comes to extract her from her high chair. Mammy lugs her off to bed. Lotty is too sleepy to protest that it is really her intention to have Uncle Jemmy carry her on his shoulder up the stairs to bed. She is asleep on Mammy's breast.

The next afternoon the Indians pass. Uncle Jemmy takes Charlotte down to the gate to see them go by. There are fifty at least. Little Charlotte swings on the gate. The Indians do not notice her. In single file they pass. It is amusing, unusual, to see the file of Indians going down the turnpike. They will camp for the night on the other side of the village. Charlotte asks Uncle Jemmy innumerable questions concerning Indians. He knows the proper answers to every one. What a mine of information! Charlotte worships him.

"That bank beyond the lilac hedge," says Uncle Jemmy, "is an old flint bed. The Indians used to come

there to get flints for their arrow-heads. If you search, you will find many broken bits of stone and some almost perfect points."

Mammy proceeds down the avenue. She claims Charlotte. Time for her supper. Time for bed. Uncle Jemmy promises that they shall search for arrow-heads early to-morrow. Off she goes, tripping beside Mammy, holding her by the hand, looking back to wave at Uncle Jemmy, still standing by the gate.

" Good-night, May Basket," he calls.

Charlotte Steppleton is four years old. Four years old, going on five. All night long she dreams of Indians. They have lilac boughs on their heads and in their hands. Showers of arrow-heads fall from the sky, but they do not hurt the Indians . . . soft as snowflakes. Charlotte Steppleton four years old. Four years old, going on five.

CHAPTER II

Charlotte Steppleton six years old, nearly seven. So old, almost a young lady. No longer "Mammy's baby chile." But neither Mammy nor Charlotte is reconciled to the change. Mammy cannot understand how Charlotte could possibly outgrow her care; Charlotte, though anxious to grow up, is restive under the increased demands made upon her years by Ma. Ma is teaching her to read. And she must take lessons on the harp and the spinet. Every day she stands for half an hour against the wall in Ma's chamber, a book balanced on her head. This exercise is intended to make her spine straight so that she will carry herself well. Never, when she is seated, will Ma permit her to touch the back of her chair. "Sit upright like a lady." How irksome it all is; how much pleasanter to roam with Mammy about the grounds, visiting the chickens, peeping over the mangers at the soft-nosed horses in the stalls, watching Unc' Cicero feed the pigs.

And she is learning to sew. Life is full of responsibilities. She must sew long seams, and she must practise stitches on samplers. Already she has done several samplers. There is one in lavender worsted on brown linen. Letters of the alphabet, both large and small, and the digits up to nought, in the corners crude representations of the sun and moon and stars, and the words "First Sampler, Charlotte Steppleton," in flowing script done in black thread. There is a second sampler done in divers colours, fruit (unknown to horticulture); flowers, very large; houses, very small, and two little girls in candle-snuffer-shaped dresses. Charlotte has a third sampler on her tambour frame. It is very elaborate . . . a border of cross-stitch like a rail fence and a stiff

soldier in each corner, some soaring fowls, and a text from Job and one from Lamentations.

Every morning Charlotte works for an hour on the sampler. When visitors come to see Ma, Charlotte must hand around the samplers to be admired. They are. That is a pleasant experience. But the work is onerous; still . . . When the task is done, she lays away the needlework in the top drawer of the chest in her own little chamber.

Charlotte loves her chest of drawers. It came from England, long ago, brought over by her great-grandmother Steppleton. It was old then; how much more so now! There is a scar on one side. Inside the scar one may see a large bullet embedded in the hard walnut wood. There are various stories to account for the bullet. One has it that a Roundhead shot at a Cavalier Steppleton sitting before the chest of drawers having his long hair dressed. Another story has it that while at sea the ship was engaged by pirates. A stray bullet lodged in the chest of drawers. Uncle Jemmy tells a story of a hawk that flew into the house and was killed by Grandpa Steppleton, the bullet passing right through the bird and embedding itself in the side of the chest. All likely stories, all romantic and thrilling to relate. On different occasions Charlotte accepts different versions as suits her mood and fancy.

Summer morning. The lawn is fresh with dew. The forget-me-nots look like a blue wash in the green grass. And the lilacs are heavy with bloom, lilac, white. Charlotte is searching the flint bed by the lilac hedge for Indian arrow-heads. It is hard to find them now, the ground has been gone over so many, many times. Charlotte has a box full of her findings, bits of broken stone, arrow-heads, spear-points, pestles, and even some fragments of pipe-bowls. Ever since the day Uncle Jemmy Steppleton showed her the Indians filing past

the house and told her about the old flint bed, Charlotte's most exhilarating pastime has been to search that bank for Indian relics.

Down she stoops, prying with her hands amongst the clumps of coarse grass, periwinkle vines, and johnny-jump-ups. Just one more arrow-head, if she could only find one more for her collection. Charlotte glances apprehensively toward the house. Mammy has warned her to keep herself clean. She is going on a journey. Already she wears her travelling bonnet and mantle. Mammy might descend upon her quite unpleasantly if she spies her rooting about in the dewy flint bed. Also the sun is hot and Ma has commanded her to remain quietly in the shade until she is called. But Charlotte tires of standing primly on the front porch. She has stolen away for just one last search for Indian remains before she goes on her journey. What if she gets sunburned, freckled? Ma will scold. And if she soils her mantle and dress, her hands, Mammy . . .

It is the War of 1812, late in the years of hostilities. Uncle Jemmy is in Washington with Mr. Madison's troops. News has come that the British have taken the city and burned the White House. The Virginia Legislature, remembering Colonel Cockburn's doings at Hampton, are apprehensive of another invasion. The militia is mustered. Pa must leave home to command a company of volunteers at Wynch's Ferry.

Charlotte has heard much about the war. She has heard of the ship *Old Ironsides*, and she knows of the terrible Indian Tecumseh, and of the capture and re-capture of Fort Detroit. When the news of the burning of Washington comes, and of how Mrs. Dolly Madison, the President's beautiful wife, had to flee from her home carrying the portrait of General Washington under her arm, Charlotte is convinced that the enemy is at the doors.

"Will they burn down this house, Ma?"

"No, dear, no; the fighting is far away, mostly on the seas."

"Then why must we run away from home, Ma?"

"We are not running away, dear. We are going on a visit to Mr. Rayfield's family in Botetourt County while your Pa is away from home. We shall soon be home again, in a few weeks."

The day of departure has come. The house is put to rights ready for closing. Pa's horse stands saddled at the gate. He will ride beside the stage-coach as far as Buffard's Tavern, twelve miles west. A carriage from Mr. Rayfield's will meet them there. Then Pa will turn back to go on to Wynch's Ferry and the camp of soldier-militia.

Mammy is calling. Ma is calling. Pa shouts too. Where is Charlotte? "Lotty! Lotty!" Not an arrow-head to be found. Charlotte plucks a hasty nosegay of periwinkle and wild pansy. She runs toward the house. She must not miss the stage-coach. She could not stay alone at home with Ma and Pa away. She hears the coachman's horn blowing in the village.

Ma is coming down the path. She has on her bonnet and shawl. Pa is there too. Charlotte runs to meet them at the gate. Unc' Bowleg Nick holds the bridle of Pa's horse, Sally Lunn. Unc' Isaacs, the butler, carries the travelling trunk. Mammy's arms are heaped high with shawls and rugs. The mulatto girl, Dolly, has the basket of food. And numerous little negro boys and girls swarm out from the quarters to see Marster and Miss depart.

The stage is coming. It has left the door of the tavern already. It is rolling down the street. The coachman blows and blows his horn. He sees the group at the Steppleton gate. He pulls up his horses with a jerk and a loud whoa.

Two passengers in the stage. One is Tavern-Keeper Buffard's daughter, Amelia Ann Buffard. On her knees she clasps a monstrous bonnet box. She has bought a new bonnet at Miss Matilda Taploe's shop. She is going home. The other passenger is a very fat man. His jowl completely overlaps his stock, and as for his paunch, words fail to describe its size. His face is very red. He is still wiping the crumbs from his repast at the tavern in the village off his lips and chin. Under the fat man's feet is a little red leather trunk.

Into the coach they get, Ma and Charlotte and Mammy. Pa mounts Sally Lunn and rides beside the window. Off the coach rolls, up and down the red hills, a long, long way. The turnpike skirts nothing. It takes the hills and valleys as they come. A long straight road.

It is very hot in the coach. Charlotte remembers the deportment of a lady. She will not permit herself to lean back against the seat. Ma does not lean back. But Mammy is already doubled up asleep. The fat man is asleep too. Ma and Miss Amelia Ann Buffard exchange remarks. They whisper queries to each other about the fat man. What is in the little red leather trunk? Where did the fat man come from? Where is he going? Who might he be?

Charlotte is very sleepy too. But she cannot go to sleep because the fat man nods so heavily that he lunges against her. How unpleasant that is! What if she had something to place between herself and him? It would be a safe barrier between them. Charlotte looks down at the little red trunk. Could she lift it to the seat between Mr. Fat Man and herself? She leans down. She tugs at the handle of the trunk. How very heavy. It must be filled with stones, or ironware.

The fat man wakes up. He apologises politely to Charlotte for tumbling against her. He was aware of it, but he could not help himself.

"I thought, sir, if I could put your trunk between us, it would be like a pillow for you to sleep on."

"Tck, tck, just so, just so," he says, lifting the trunk. It is very heavy even for his great strength.

Ma looks anxiously at her daughter. Is she behaving altogether decorously? What are she and the fat man saying? Ma has been dozing. Amelia Ann too.

"It seems to be rather a heavy trunk to be so small a one," ventures Charlotte to her new friend.

"Ay, little mistress, gold is heavy. But it is as safe here on the seat as 'twould be under my feet."

"Is it really gold?" asks Charlotte. She opens her eyes very wide.

But the fat man is already beginning to sleep again. "Nigger money," he says, and slumbers once more. The little trunk keeps him from toppling against Charlotte.

Nigger money? Then he is a slave-dealer. Has he just sold slaves in Belair, or is he on the way to purchase some? But he is asleep. He cannot answer even if it were polite to ask. The question is not in Charlotte's mind. It is before the attention of Ma and Miss Amelia Ann.

"La, Mis' Steppleton, do you reckon we are safe from highwaymen with a box of gold in the coach?" Miss Buffard is apprehensive.

"Pray give yourself no uneasiness, Miss Buffard. Mr. Steppleton is with us. He has a good brace of pistols. Besides, I never heard of any highwaymen on this turnpike."

Thus eased and protected, the stage-passengers slumber. And the little red trunk of gold, "nigger money," keeps the fat man from crushing little Charlotte.

One o'clock; Buffard's Tavern; change of horses; dinner. Miss Buffard re-enters the bosom of her family

amid loud acclaims from a bevy of sisters younger than herself. Mr. Tim Buffard receives the fat man into his road-house and feeds him on chicken, potatoes, and pie. Ma and Mammy spread the contents of the large lunch-basket on the grass in the shade of a large chestnut tree.

While they are eating, Mr. Rayfield's carriage drives up. Old Nero is the coachman. His hair is white and he has lost all his teeth. He wears a very old-fashioned hat, shorts too, and buckled shoes. Mr. Steppleton inquires about the family at Pine Grove. Are they well? Is Mr. Rayfield at home? Is there much company? Has the wheat been harvested? How is the tobacco?

CHAPTER III

DARK when the carriage drives in at the Pine Grove gate, and a sickle moon over the cedars. Lights in every window. So many people at Mr. Rayfield's house.

Negro servants spring up out of the very ground to hold the horses' heads, to let down the steps of the carriage, to carry in the luggage. Mrs. Rayfield herself comes down the steps of the front porch to greet the refugees. "Dear Mis' Steppleton! And this is little Lotty? O my, how great the child has grown!"

So many people; a host of Rayfields, sons and daughters, cousins great and small, friends. Ma is surprised and delighted to find her only brother here, Uncle Harvey Twitchell. He paints portraits, going from one plantation to another painting the likenesses of the people. He is a widower, but a very gay one, still young and personable, and loves to dance. No one can call the figures of the quadrille more perfectly than he, nor dance the minuet so well. What a surprise to find Uncle Harvey at Pine Grove! Ma is entranced to see Uncle Harvey. He is charmed to see "Sis."

Charlotte is dazed in the lights after the dark. So many people confuse her, people coming and going, people in the wide hall, on the stairs, in the adjoining rooms. Music, laughter, talk. Charlotte is just awake too. She has been asleep in the carriage. She blinks and sinks herself well into the capacious folds of Ma's skirts. Dela Rayfield's pet cat, Maltese Toby, comes and rubs himself against her ankles. Back and forth he goes, tail up, out and under the edges of Charlotte's dress. And he purrs ever so loudly.

"Kitty, kitty!" Small hands reaching for the cat.

Charlotte peeks out of the fold of Ma's skirt. She sees a little boy just beside her, stooping down, reaching for the cat. But Toby will not come. Slyly he eludes the grasping fingers of the child, rubbing back and forth, round and round, the shins of the little girl.

"How tired you must be!" exclaims Mrs. Rayfield. "Come right in the dining-room. Katy, Margaret, bring some supper directly!

Into the dining-room they go, Toby and the little boy following. Charlotte holds on to Ma's hand. She is heavy with sleep again. Supper for Charlotte of milk-toast and cambric tea, and she goes to rest in a trundle bed beside the high one where Ma will sleep. Mammy helps her to undress. Dear Mammy, but she is slightly cross. She is very tired. The day has been ever so long, the road so far, so far.

Cat Toby appears again. He leaps upon the bed to nestle in the crook of Charlotte's arm. "Dear kitty, dear pussy." Somewhere a whippoorwill is calling, and the frogs sing in a variety of keys all along the banks of the spring-branch at the bottom of the garden. Toby purrs aloud, and Charlotte sleeps.

Early in the morning Charlotte is out to inspect the locality. Back yard, garden, barnyard, fold; chickens, hounds, hogs, and sheep. She peeps into the cool shade of the spring-house; watches the ducks on the pond; gathers sweet-williams to carry in her hand. At the barnyard gate the little boy of the night before appears. He has on a blue suit with a white collar. His hair is wet, plastered down with the brushing.

"What's your name?" he asks of Charlotte.

Charlotte is embarrassed. She wishes to run away. But the boy, without waiting for an answer, says: "They's a lot o' new puppies came last night. Come, I'll show 'em to you."

Five minutes seals the friendship. The boy picks out

a puppy for himself. Charlotte picks out one for herself. They are white with pink snouts, eyes closed, and they whine and squeal gently all the time. What fun to hug and fondle the puppies!

The boy's name is Robert Armistead Tirwell. He tells Charlotte all about himself. He is an orphan. His father and mother are dead, in the spring. He lived with them in Washington, and sometimes at Franklin Forest in Virginia, but not often. His father was the friend of Mr. President Jefferson. At Franklin Forest there is a red desk Mr. Jefferson gave Pa. Now Robert is going to live in Philadelphia with his uncle, who is his guardian. When he is big he will go to live at Franklin Forest. That is his own home. But far, far away from here. Mrs. Rayfield is his cousin. He is spending the summer at Pine Grove.

Here is a tragic figure, and a romantic one. Charlotte has little to match of personal history to that of Robert Armistead Tirwell. Her name is not important. She has not even heard of Mr. President Jefferson, much less seen him. And her pa and ma are both alive. She lives on the other side ot the mountains on the edge of the village of Belair.

She cudgels her brains for something notable to tell Robert. Ah! She has seen Indians. They filed past her home a long time ago. She watched them go. And in her yard there is a flint bed. She has a box full of arrowheads and such like that she has found there. "And my Uncle Jemmy Steppleton jumped his horse over the highest gate that ever you saw!"

So? Robert is only politely interested. He turns once more to the bed of puppies. Eight, four dogs and four bitches. The tails of the dogs will be cut off . . . "You bites 'em off." And doubtless the bitches will be drowned.

What thoughts! Charlotte bursts into loud sobs. She

cannot bear to have the baby puppies drowned, and to bite off the tails of the boys . . . ! It takes a deal of explaining to Mammy before she will believe " dat boy " hasn't hurt " mer baby chile." Robert is crestfallen. He had only meant to show his worldly-wiseness. He is sent off to find his breakfast. And Charlotte must be dressed anew after her peregrinations about the place, in the tall grass all wet with dew, in the mud by the branch and the duck pond, and the doggishness of the hollow tree where the litter of puppies is.

" And, Mammy, there are real foxes in a cage by the barn ! "

Romantic Uncle Harvey Twitchell. Two sad bereavements have surrounded him with a special glamour. Some years ago he was engaged to be married to a Richmond belle. The wedding day was set. Uncle Harvey had made all his arrangements to go to Richmond for the ceremony, soon after Christmas. On December 26, 1811, the lady with her Pa and Ma attended the theatre on Academy Square. The stock company was to give a gala performance with Mistress Elizabeth Arnold Poe* in the cast. All Richmond was there. In the midst of the performance there was a cry of fire. The theatre burned. There was a dreadful panic. Very few people were saved, many burned to death, many crushed and smothered in the rush and the smoke.

And Uncle Harvey's fiancée perished in the flames. Her remains were identified by means of a necklace she is known to have worn. Her Pa and Ma, too, were burned to death. It was a terrible tragedy. All Richmond mourned. All Virginia was horror-struck.

Uncle Harvey was nearly beside himself with grief. He could not remain at home. He mounted his horse, Martius. He rode about the country from estate to estate, never able to bear remaining long in one place.

* Mother of the poet Edgar Allan Poe, she was a favourite actress.

He was too prostrated by the unexpected and cruel death of his beloved to rest calmly anywhere.

But what was the astonishment of Ma, and what was the astonishment of all of Uncle Harvey's friends and acquaintances, when, less than six months after the fire, Uncle Harvey rode into his brother-in-law Steppleton's gate with a bride on the pillion behind him. She was a buxom little thing, very shy, and she blushed a great deal. Her father was a small farmer in Fluvanna County, and because nobody had ever heard of him or his family before, they were all the more surprised at Uncle Harvey's consoling himself so soon.

But Mistress Harvey seemed very happy. Not for long, however, for just a year later she died in childbed. Uncle Harvey mourned her loss and that of the infant with sincerest sorrow. Charlotte remembers seeing him wandering about the grounds moping, weeping, wearing black. She also thinks she remembers her Aunt Harvey, but she is not sure. Perhaps it is only the name and the talk of her elders that makes her think she does.

So Uncle Harvey is single again, still young, still personable, still debonair, affect the contrary as he will. Mammas receive him graciously everywhere. Young demoiselles are far from averse to his company and attentions. But Uncle Harvey declares life is finished for him. His loves have caused him to suffer too deeply. He professes to have a broken spirit. He will never marry again. No lady disputes his word but in their hearts they do not take his declarations too seriously. Time . . . and hope . . .

So Uncle Harvey rides about the country painting portraits. At Pine Grove he has four painting orders. A portrait of Mr. and Mrs. Rayfield each, he in his colonel's uniform, she in the garb of a shepherdess holding a crook and showing two very prettily turned ankles. Mrs. Rayfield blushes as she apologises for having

her likeness done in so youthful and fanciful a fashion. It is Mr. Rayfield's wish. Miss Dela Rayfield is sitting for her portrait too, just a bust with a bouquet of roses held at breast. Mr. Rayfield's invalid sister, Martha, endures posing for an hour each morning. She reclines on a sofa. Uncle Harvey sits across the room. She is draped in white and holds a single lily languidly in her hand.

There is at Pine Grove a brisk old lady, Mrs. Rayfield's maternal aunt, Miss Amanda Towser. She belongs to the old school, as her dress and her manner plainly show. She declares herself a Tory. If she were a man, she would remove at once to Canada. Her sex and her estate compel her to live amongst the rebel subjects of the King. Mr. Rayfield twits Aunt Towser good-naturedly on the subject. It is a good joke which everybody understands and laughs at.

Aunt Towser has very rosy cheeks, like pippins, and from dawn till dark she is busy about the place. She has complete charge and control of all the garment-making on the estate. Her realm is the loom-room, a large barny building in the back yard. Here she oversees both spinning and weaving, cotton and wool, and the half-dozen young negro women work under her direction. Clothes must be made for the family, also for the black people of the plantation. Aunt Towser is effective in the whole business.

Aunt Towser indulges herself in snuff. It is a practice that is passing out of fashion. But Aunt Towser will have nothing to do with fashion. However, because the pinch of snuff at the moment of administration causes her to make divers grimaces, she will only indulge herself in private. If the desire to take a whiff comes upon her in the presence of company, she retires behind the door to satisfy herself. Sometimes the snuff makes her sneeze like the going off of a blunderbuss. It is the delight of

naughty children to spy upon her and, when they hear the noise of the sneeze, to fling back the door and discomfit the old lady by discovery.

One day Aunt Towser is in company in the hall when the craving for snuff comes upon her. She makes a hasty excuse and flies into the parlour, snuffbox in hand. Uncle Harvey is in the parlour, painting the portrait of Miss Martha. Only at the moment he is not at his task, but on his knees paying court to the lady, kissing her hand. And the lady is quite delighted with the attention. Aunt Towser bounces into the room. Uncle Harvey springs to his feet. Miss Martha nearly swoons. But Aunt Towser takes in the situation at a glance.

"Pray do not explain. Bless you, my children, my dears!" She pops behind the door. "If you will excuse me . . . Kerchoo-o-o!!"

And so the company at Pine Grove knew that Uncle Harvey was cured of his grief, and that he and Miss Martha would share life together. There is universal rejoicing and fun over the affair. The wedding day is set, hastened, in fact, so that Mrs. Steppleton and Charlotte may witness the ceremony before returning home to Belair.

The bride-to-be retires to her chamber. She is not seen by the household in public until the happy day arrives, while Uncle Harvey posts off to Baltimore to fit himself for the occasion. He returns driving in a barouche, and in the barouche he and his bride drive away from Pine Grove to spend their honeymoon on a visit to friends in the adjoining county. Aunt Towser declares she made the match.

CHAPTER IV

TIME flies ; busy days ; busy years ; Charlotte Stepplеton twelve years old. The life and bustle of the Belair household ebb and flow about her. She is learning all the time, to read and write, to sew and to acquire housewifery, thrift. Ma sets her the best examples. Pa manages the estate. He also practices law. He builds a square brick office in the grounds near the road and there receives occasional clients. Uncle Jemmy is his partner.

But Uncle Jemmy does not care for the practice of the law. He prefers literature and gentlemanly leisure. He teaches Charlotte Latin. Together they read Horace and Virgil. And the English poets occupy happy days and hours—Spenser, Milton, Dryden, others. Charlotte loves to read Shakespeare's plays with her preceptor ; he takes the masculine rôles, she the feminine. Ophelia and Cordelia are her favourites, and perhaps Rosalind.

Uncle Jemmy enjoys puttering about the grounds, planting shrubs, designing rockeries, building arbors. All along the banks by the roadside he plants Japanese honeysuckle. How deliciously sweet it is in the spring and early summer ! The bees haunt the fragrant banks. And along all the fence-lines of the place he puts in hedges of Scotch-broom. Mr. Jefferson has introduced it into the country to stop the washing of the gullies. Uncle Jemmy sends all the way to Monticello in Albemarle County for plantings and seeds. In May the long green withes blossom with yellow pea-like flowers, and later there are small pods with shiny black seeds rattling in them. The Scotch-broom is very hardy. It grows apace. The black people cut it to make brooms.

Once, when Charlotte is ten years old, Uncle Jemmy almost gets married. Ma invites the daughter of Professor McBurr, of the County Academy, to make her a visit. Her name is Miss Betsy. She is a charming miss. She is delighted to stay at Belair.

She arrives by stage one afternoon in May. Ma and Charlotte await her at the gate. She alights from the stage, her face so swathed in veils that only the tip of her chin can be seen. The veils are to protect her complexion. But when the covers are removed, Charlotte sees that she is lovely, such a round chin, such fresh plump cheeks, and eyes like two shining stars. She laughs all the time. She has two hat-boxes and a trunk. She shows Charlotte all her things. Charlotte displays her own handiwork, samplers, and the cotton aprons she is making. She also reveals to her the contents of the box of Indian relics, and conducts the guest into her little room to point out the mysterious bullet embedded in the old chest of drawers.

In the cool of the evening, Charlotte walks out in the grounds with her dear, dear Miss Betsy. They stroll toward the big carriage gate, and Miss Betsy hears how Uncle Jemmy disdains having it opened for him when he comes riding home. He always puts his horse at the gate to jump it. Miss Betsy can hardly believe such a marvel.

Ah, here comes Uncle Jemmy now. Does Miss Betsy know her Uncle Jemmy Steppleton ? Miss Betsy blushes and says she has sometimes danced with him at the balls in the court-house and the County Assemblies. She wishes to turn back to the house, but Charlotte will not permit a return. Uncle Jemmy is already before them. He is not riding, but leading his horse by the bridle. Beside him walks Captain Alfred Bassett, of Swan Creek. Miss Betsy McBurr knows him too. The gentlemen stop to greet the lady.

" La, Mr. Steppleton . . . Major Steppleton, I should say . . . I am disappointed to see you on foot. Dear little Miss Lotty is just telling me that you invariably leap your horse over the high gate. I can scarcely believe it."

Uncle Jemmy is intrigued. He smiles with pride and pleasure. " Yes, Marm, Lotty is right ; I sometimes do. If it will give you any pleasure, I'll mount Larkspur and leap her over for you."

" Pray, Major Steppleton, don't endanger yourself."

" No danger at all, Marm, Miss Betsy." And Uncle Jemmy mounts on Larkspur's back and canters rapidly out of the gate, up the road several hundred yards or so. Then he puts the spurs into Larkspur's flank ; on he comes like the wind, shouting, waving his crop. And Larkspur soars over the high spiked gates.

Miss Betsy is all admiration. She claps her hands, and she blushes beautifully as she looks up into Uncle Jemmy's face.

" Damme, Jeems," exclaims Captain Bassett, " I'll do that too." Captain Bassett is no laggard for the ladies' favour. He longs to stand as well as Major Steppleton in the admiration of Miss Betsy McBurr.

So Captain Bassett mounts his horse. Captain Basett canters to a good distance beyond the gate. Captain Bassett plies his spurs, and on he comes. The spectators are breathless with eager expectation. The horse rises into the air, but, horror of horrors ! fails to make the gate. The poor beast falls heavily on the sharp spikes. He is impaled on them cruelly.

What a terrible mishap ! Uncle Jemmy throws one arm over Charlotte's face to prevent her seeing more of the tragedy. Miss Betsy McBurr faints dead away. Servants come running from every direction. Pa rushes out of the office. Ma flies down the avenue. Miss Betsy

is assisted into the house and put to bed. Also Charlotte. Poor Captain Bassett is dying with chagrin and mortification. Pa gives him much brandy to drink. The Captain goes home and tipples heavily for three days.

No one speaks of the accident again.

Miss Betsy McBurr recovers her health and spirits in a day or so. She remains at Belair for five or six weeks. Uncle Jemmy's susceptible heart wakes to love for the fair lady. What is his joy to find that she reciprocates his passion! They are betrothed. The wedding day is fixed for October.

On the day that she returns to her home in a distant part of the county, Charlotte, who is inconsolable at the thought of losing her dear "Aunt Betsy" as she now calls her, follows at her heels everywhere she goes. But once the lady eludes her. Charlotte searches high and low for her. At last she finds her with Uncle Jemmy behind the lilac hedge at the side of the house. Charlotte comes upon them suddenly. Uncle Jemmy is on his knees on the grass. He holds both the lady's hands clasped in his own, and he is looking up into her face with the greatest rapture. Miss Betsy disengages one of her hands. She takes the rosebud from her breast, presses it to her lips, and then into Uncle Jemmy's hands.

"Always true!"

"Beloved!"

Charlotte steals away. She has not been seen.

Belair abandons itself with preparations for the reception of the bride. In another year Uncle Jemmy will build another house for himself on a distant part of the estate. All the plans are made. Uncle Jemmy has new boots, and he has bought a charming little pony-chaise for his beloved Betsy. Several times Charlotte catches him stealing the rosebud out of his wallet, holding it in the palm of his hand, pressing his lips against it.

Uncle Jemmy is very much in love. Will the wedding day never come ? So long till October.

Early in September, one dusty, sultry day, Aaron McBurr, the brother of Betsy, rides furiously up the Belair avenue from the stage-road to the house. He is covered with dust. Perspiration streams down his face. He calls for Pa. There is a family conclave in the parlour. Charlotte is excluded. She wanders about the grounds wondering what can be the matter. Then Aaron McBurr comes out of the house. He mounts his horse and gallops away. Uncle Jemmy comes out, too. He crosses the yard to the law office. He does not come out again until evening. Charlotte sees his face. It is very white and hard. What can be the matter ?

Alas ! how fickle is woman ! False Betsy McBurr ! Almost on the eve of the marriage she has eloped with one of the students in her father's institution of learning. He is a dashing blade more advanced in years than in his Latin grammar.

False jade ! false Betsy McBurr ! Ah, how can she treat Uncle Jemmy so !

So Uncle Jemmy is jilted. Ma's dear heart bleeds for her poor brother-in-law. She will never forgive herself for having invited Miss Betsy McBurr to stay at Belair. Coquette ! How deeply is Uncle Jemmy wounded, in his heart, in his pride ! So deeply ! Little Charlotte conceives in her innermost soul a perpetual horror of coquetry. Her love for Betsy is turned to hate. Her childish heart is soured.

This so bitter disappointment confirms Uncle Jemmy's bachelorhood forever. After the first shock of surprise and chagrin, he makes a manly effort. He throws off the depression that is weighing him down. But the suggestion of James Steppleton's possible marriage, hitherto joyous hope taken for granted, is never mentioned again by any member of the family.

A year or more goes by and the wound seems healed. But Charlotte, dusting the covers of Uncle Jemmy's Bible, turns over the pages, and there, pressed in the centre of the heavy book, she finds the faded rosebud. There is a faint fragrance about it, but not the same as from the fresh and living flower.

Time changes much. Busy days; busy years. Charlotte has a round plum cake, sugared in white, on the day that she is twelve years old. Uncle Jemmy gives her a tiny golden locket. Charlotte knows he had got it for his bride. She kisses him fondly and hangs the locket about her throat.

CHAPTER V

NEAR by Belair Mansion lives Mr. Nathaniel Blood. He is the schoolmaster of the village. A very fierce old party. He has a high hooked nose, and his eyebrows beetle like hedges. Down the sides of his face creeps a growth of hair like poisonous vine. He wears a shiny green coat with enormous flapping tails, very large buckles on his shoes, and an old-fashioned wig called a peruke. In his school Mr. Blood instructs both boys and girls of the younger sort. Charlotte is thankful she is not numbered among them, for he has the reputation of being an implacable master. None of the boys escapes birching, and that frequently, and the girls weep for being locked alone in the empty schoolroom for punishment.

Mr. Blood's house is built on the side of a steep hill. The top story is on a level with the village street, while the lower floor is, as it were, down the hillside. Mr. Blood lives aloft. He conducts his school in the apartment below-stairs. Any afternoon, when the boys and

girls have gone home or are confined as delinquents in the schoolroom, Mr. Blood may be seen at his supper of cabbages and ale. His only slave, an old negro crone named Rachel, cooks his meals and tends his house.

Mr. Blood considers himself a musician. He plays on the flageolet. When the few Church people of the town have service in the court-house, Mr. Blood is invariably there with a tuning-fork to pitch the note for the hymns. On these occasions he wears a black coat, and, strangely enough, no wig.

Mr. Blood is "Church." He despises the "sectaries," as he denominates the honest Methodists and Baptists of the village and countryside. But he is more lenient toward the little group of Presbyterians. He calls them "Scots."

The Church people of Belair represent the smallest section of the community. There are a few Church families in the country. It is not often that they have a visiting minister to come to the village to conduct a service, preach, and give them the Sacrament. Not above four or five times a year, sometimes less. They possess no church building, but must hold their worship in the court-house.

At home Mr. Steppleton reads prayers night and morning. On Sundays the house-servants come into the dining-room with the family to listen to a sermon read and to hear the Scripture lessons and prayers from the Prayer Book.

Upon those rare occasions when a minister visits Belair, he is invariably the guest of the Steppletons. Just before service time, Pa walks with him to the court-house. When they come abreast of the house of Master Blood, that worthy stands ready at the door to accompany them to the meeting. Rachel follows bearing a gigantic Prayer Book for her lord's own personal use.

Many of Mr. Blood's "sectaries" failed to share that

gentleman's narrow prejudices. They have little objection to attending "Church preaching" in the courthouse. And indeed the singing would languish badly were they absent. But Mr. Blood scowls at them, for they will not read the Psalms verse by verse, nor stand up for the singing of the hymns.

The minister wears a long and flowing white surplice when he reads the service. When he preaches his sermon he changes into a black gown. The sermon is always an hour long, sometimes longer. Less would not be meet.

Once Charlotte sneezes just as Mr. Blood is about to strike his tuning-fork. He looks at the embarrassed child with his hard old eyes and turns his tuning-fork directly upon her. She would like to sink into the ground. The minister looks over his spectacles at her with a kindly twinkle in his eye and she is reassured. But Ma makes her say, "Pray excuse me, sir," to Mr. Blood after the service is over.

Mr. Blood always invites Pa and the minister into his abode for a hot toddy, and if it is not the Sabbath Day, he regales them with divers squawkings on the flageolet. He is very sanctimonious in the presence of the minister. He complains of the laxity of the times and of his despair of the coming generation. There is no learning any more. Young people grow up like weeds, despising elders. But Mr. Blood takes care that discipline shall prevail in his schoolroom. No pupil under his rod and wing shall fail to have his becoming precepts and admonishments.

Indeed, Mr. Blood is unduly severe. Once there is news that he has beaten a boy almost to death, leaving him bruised and unconscious in the empty schoolroom. The children flee away before his rage and the thrashing birch rods. But the little fellow's sister creeps back to spy in the window. She sees her brother lying on the floor. Crying and tearing her hair, she rushes away to tell her father. The father, with several of the neighbours, comes

to the schoolmaster's house. But Mr. Blood locks himself in and will neither open the door nor answer calls. The men break in the schoolroom window and carry off the injured child.

Thereafter the village folk eschew Mr. Blood and his learning. They would rather have their children grow up in utter ignorance than be at the mercy of such a terrible old man. The school ceases to operate. There is talk of starting an academy, importing a teacher. The closing of the school cuts off the income and support of Mr. Blood. He is too proud and stubborn to turn his hand to anything else. So he nearly starves.

He shuts himself into his house and will not appear on the street. Old Rachel raises chickens and a few vegetables, and she weaves baskets of willow withes to sell. Thus a precarious existence is eked out for her master and herself. The old man broods bitterly in his castle. He begins to grow mad, or nearly so, and threatens poor Rachel with a gun. She is in terror of her life, but she does not leave him. She is afraid to run away. Sometimes at night Mr. Blood can be heard howling and declaiming Latin verbs, but in the daytime a deathly stillness broods over the house on the hillside. The schoolroom is deserted except for chickens who flutter in through the broken windows to find shelter in the unused place.

Mad Nathaniel Blood! His condition is pitiable. No one dares go near him. But the better spirits of the township consult together what to do for him. He is manifestly out of his wits. At last he is haled away to the almshouse, and his house is left vacant except for old Rachel, who skulks about the only home she has ever known.

After the death of Mr. Blood, the house is declared to be haunted. Thus the old man is more terrible in death than in life. The black people tell fearful stories of him

and his house. Surely Rachel is a witch. Children will not walk past the place, even in broad daylight.

Charlotte hears the tales. She is deeply impressed and frightened by them. But Ma will not hear of such extravagant superstitions. "Poor, unfortunate old man," she says. She wishes Rachel to come to live amongst the Steppleton black people, but Rachel is half mad herself. She will not leave home. Ma goes herself regularly to take her bread and meat, and fuel is thrown from the woodpile into the yard of Mr. Blood's house.

One winter's morning old Rachel is found dead lying on the miserable bed in the attic where she slept. On her breast is the flageolet. For the peace of mind of the townsfolk, the village aldermen order the old shack to be burned down. As the flames mount skyward, the whole population assembles to watch the destruction of the sinister place. Charlotte's soul is filled with awe and wonder. One of the deepest impressions of her childhood is filed away in her memory. It is far from a pleasant recollection.

CHAPTER VI

Uncle Harvey Twitchell has so many children. The barouche is packed full of them. Aunt Harvey is no longer an invalid. She has quite forgotten that fact, a mere caprice of her immature maidenhood. Now she is wife and mother, far too concerned with family affairs to think of herself. Such a large family takes all her attention. She has no time for herself, nor does she desire it. Every year she is more blooming, more teeming with motherhood and health. The bridal barouche is now the family carry-all. Like a nest on wheels, it rolls about the country, from home to home, from estate to estate, wherever Uncle Harvey is in demand for portrait painting. Uncle Harvey can no longer ride in the barouche. It is too full of children. He reinstates himself on the back of the faithful Martisus and rides beside the wheel of the carriage.

Aunt Harvey has a confinement every year. She stops at Pine Grove and Belair in alternate order for those events, one time at her brother Rayfield's, the next time at Sister Steppleton's. When the barouche rolls in at either gate, it is a sign that another baby is on the way. Aunt Harvey is getting stout. Her lackadaisical airs have left her. She is the most matter-of-fact and easy-going of women and mothers. She wears a large poke bonnet when she travels, but as soon as the barouche discharges its load, she bedecks her head in a yellow turban.

It is a great day at Belair when the barouche arrives. The household and half the quarters rush out to assist in

the unloading. Uncle Harvey's one slave, old black Matt, once his body-servant, now his coachman, draws his horses neatly abreast of the steps of the veranda. Uncle Harvey is already on the ground to lift Aunt Martha down. The babies are distributed amongst the maids and women eager to receive them. But Charlotte always claims the youngest—so young, and another to come!

There is delightful bustle and confusion until the Twitchells are safely stowed away. An orgy of sewing begins. New clothes must be made for the whole family. How the children grow! Ma declares she cannot keep up with such a brood. She threatens to sew labels on the dresses of each one in order to remember which is which. Harvey, Margaret, Alice, and Jane; Edward, Rayfield, Thomas, and Lucy.

Charlotte is sixteen when Lucy is born. She feels quite grown up; for the first time Ma admits her to the secret conferences of Aunt Harvey and herself, conferences on the subject of confinements and babies. She is treated as one of themselves.

Charlotte gives up her mammy when the Twitchells are at Belair. She fends for herself with the cursory assistance of Dolly. But Mammy is getting old. She is nearly blind at the time of Lucy's birth. Dolly must take her place, not officially, but as it were factually. Mammy directs and putters about, but Dolly does the work of the nursery.

Ma gives Charlotte a maid. Her very own. She is not to do another thing but Charlotte's will and behests. Her name is Prissy, wild black girl from the quarters. But she has possibilities. Ma is sure she has the instincts of a house-servant. She has very bright eyes, large, almost popping out of her face, and a great mop of kinky hair done in tight plaits and bound down with strings. Barefoot all her life, when she is brought into the

house, shoes are given her. They are the pride and delight of her soul. Every leisure moment is spent in stealing away to disport herself on the village street, so proud is she of her new clothes and her shoes.

Prissy pretends to errands in the town. She minces along the footpath with the nicest manners in the world. She cultivates the acquaintance of all the village folk. "Miss Charlotte Steppleton's own maid." If Charlotte goes on to the street, Prissy is sure to be but a step or two behind her. "La, Prissy, it is quite unnecessary for you always to walk abroad with me." "'Deed, Little Miss, I wouldn't desert yer for the whole worl'."

Miss Matilda Taploe's is the house of chiefest delight to Prissy. In the mantua-maker's little parlour are to be seen the garments-to-be of the entire community, and the hats. Prissy multiplies excuses and reasons for a visit there.

Miss Matilda is no longer very young. She has one bleary eye, and her throat is greatly enlarged by a goitre. She wears a bonnet and gloves all the time. The gloves have the fingers clipped away. Miss Matilda is the intimate and particular gossip of Miss Amelia Ann Buffard, the daughter of old Tim Buffard, who keeps the tavern on the turnpike. Miss Buffard herself aspires to the craft of mantua-maker and ladies' shop-keeper. She is frequently in the village to assist Miss Taploe in the conduct of her trade. She also dresses formally when serving behind the counter of the tiny shop—bonnet and shawl and gloves.

Upon the numerous occasions when Prissy finds excuse to visit the shop of Miss Taploe, for a skein of yarn, for a spool of thread, to inquire when Little Miss may expect her new mantle to be done, Miss Buffard enjoys the opportunity to listen to accounts of doings at Belair Mansion, doings which it is the delight of Prissy to relate. "La, Miss Buffy, yo' all ought ter see my Little

Miss's fine gown her Unc' Jeems fetched her from Petersburg ! " What is it ? Silk ? What colour ? What pattern ? What price would you say ? Prissy has a satisfactory if extravagant and fanciful answer to every query.

On wet or stormy days, when Charlotte remains indoors, sewing, reading, practising on spinet or harp, or perhaps playing backgammon with Pa, black maid Prissy, feeling safe, ventures forth to enjoy a little time with Miss Amelia Ann Buffard at Miss Taploe's shop. The occasion likewise is propitious for her to don odd ends of finery belonging to her mistress . . . a parasol, a ribbon, gloves, or something of the kind. " What a generous mistress you have, Prissy, to give you so many of her pretty things ! " " 'Deed, Miss Buffy, she 'nies me nuthin' ! "

It is remarked by Miss Buffard that Prissy falls heir to the fashionable prunella shoes belonging to Miss Steppleton. Gray prunellas, mauve prunellas, dark blue, and red, and pale green prunellas. Every rainy afternoon Prissy has on a pair of the delicate things. " Prissy won't you spoil your fine shoes in the wet and the mud ? " Prissy stick out a foot shod in very damp, fine-leather, green prunellas. " Never-come-mind," she remarks casually, " dese is de wussest par I'se got."

But Miss Buffard feels it behoves her to mention the fact when next she encounters Miss Charlotte out of doors. Miss Charlotte is noncommittal. However, Prissy is soundly scolded and threatened with return to the quarters if she does not mend her sly ways. The prunellas are removed beyond temptation. Charlotte locks them up in a little trunk under her bed. Later she gives them to Dolly, and poor Prissy is very crestfallen indeed. Her humiliation is such that she cannot bring herself to visit Miss Taploe's shop for the space of a great many weeks.

Dear baby Lucy! Aunt Harvey's youngest. She is Charlotte's special charge and pet. Every day she bathes and dresses the minute morsel of humanity, and she rocks her cradle hour on hour, and walks with her up and down the nursery or veranda. She is to be godmother at the christening when next the minister comes to Belair. Possibly before Christmas.

Bright cold morning in December. Leaping fire in the nursery fireplace. Mammy warming flannels at the blaze. Dolly fetching in hot water for baby Lucy's bath. Charlotte with her charge wrapped in a soft blanket lying on her knees. There is a fine frost pattern on the window-panes, and white frost on lawn and trees, glistening, sparkling in the sunshine. Enter Ma with a letter.

"Charlotte," says Ma, "what do you suppose! Dear Mrs. Rayfield writes that Dela is to be married to young Tony Lester on Christmas Eve. Such children! There is to be a large company at Pine Grove. Mrs. Rayfield wishes you to be there. Dela hopes you will be one of her bridesmaids."

"Oh, Ma! do you reckon I may go?"

"No reason at all, my dear, why you should not if we can contrive a way of your travelling into Botetourt. Doubtless the Langley girls will be going from Wynch's Ferry. You might join their company as they pass through Belair. I will write to Mrs. Langley directly. Will you answer this letter from Mrs. Rayfield for me? Say you hope to be one of the Christmas party at Pine Grove."

Ecstatic thought! A real party, a wedding, grown up! How charming of Dela Rayfield to choose Charlotte for a bridesmaid, Dela who is at least seven or eight years Charlotte's senior. But how can Charlotte bear to part with little Lucy? What will she wear at the wedding? Will it be possible to join herself to the party from

Wynch's Ferry? Such a turmoil of thoughts, conjectures, plans, hopes, happiness! Charlotte Steppleton sixteen years old and going far away without Ma, going to a wedding, bridesmaid. Delightful, delightful world!

CHAPTER VII

Roads hard frozen, clear skies, nipping air, December weather. A carriage full of Langley's stops overnight at Belair. The party is dominated by Miss Maria Langley, a rigid and severe old maid. It is protected by divers gentlemen on horseback, who ride ahead to reconnoitre the way or beside the windows to regale the bevy of ladies within the carriage by sprightly conversation.

Blazing fires in every room at Belair. The visiting ladies will be accommodated in the house, the gentlemen in the office. Every bed is full, and pallets on the floor. Such chatter and laughter everywhere. It is the first contingent of Christmas guests on the way to the wedding at Pine Grove.

So many guests! Miss Maria Langley with three nieces, Kitty, Clara, and Sue. Two cousins, Laura and Rachel. A coachful. Judge Langley himself leads the cavalry. Two sons, Richard and John, twenty-three and twenty-two years old respectively. Mr. Lewis Trumell, hanger-on and friend, like Melchizedek *sui generis*, a familiar of the Langleys. And, glowing with life and spirits, young Robert Armistead Tirwell, eighteen years old and just down from the new University of Virginia at Charlottesville. First holidays.

Charlotte remembers him, not his face, but his name. She remembers him at Pine Grove years and years and years ago! What a little girl was she then! what a young lady is she now! She remembers how he made her cry over the new puppies, but more pleasantly, how

they followed the reapers of the wheat, looking for partridge nests and young rabbits, and such happy times swinging on the grape-vine in the orchard, building dams across the spring-branch. And she remembers how they ate the little red love-apples growing wild at the edge of the garden. It frightened kind Mrs. Rayfield. She looked for the children to die. Love-apples are accounted poison. Of course they didn't die. Saved by feathers and oil.

Charlotte is quite demure with Master Robert. He is very shy. But they dance a minuet together when Ma and Mr. Langley urge them to it. And Charlotte renders a selection on the harp. The performance entrances Master Robert. He whispers to Charlotte at supper that even in Philadelphia, or in Charlottesville, he had never heard the instrument so touchingly played. The expression of such a sentiment makes the lad turn fiery red, deeply embarrassed at his own boldness. But Charlotte is no less so.

"La, Mr. Tirwell, how can you say such things! Surely the great ladies you know abroad are mistresses of music such as I can never be."

"I swear no," declares the youth. "I never heard anything so melodious in my life before."

But the ladies are retiring. The gentlemen are to have their hot punch before stamping across the yard to the office, where they will sleep.

Daylight, sunrise. What a hot breakfast! How abundant! Servants in every direction, such a bustle of departure. Miss Langley can hardly walk, she has on so many mantles and shawls. Unc' Isaacs runs out to shove a charcoal footwarmer in the floor of the carriage. The ladies run hither and thither with hat-boxes, valises shawls, and bags. The gentlemen slap their hands and thighs to warm them from the cold, as they stand near the mounting-block waiting for Bowleg Nick and his

henchmen to lead the horses up from the stables. Charlotte is dressed for the journey, radiant with life and anticipation, so happy. She kisses the little Twitchell children over and over again. "And have the greatest care of my darling Lucy."

Time for the party to start. Into the carriage with laughter and shouting, good-byes, good-byes. The gentlemen are mounted. Small Nick scampers to throw open the great gates. Off they go for the day's journey to Pine Grove, Christmas party, and the wedding. Charlotte looks back. There is Ma, standing on the veranda, waving, waving good-bye; and Pa, Uncle Jemmy, Uncle Harvey by the horse-block; Aunt Harvey in an aureole of children's faces gazing after the party from the window.

Hard roads, clear skies, nipping air, December weather. Christmas ahead, and a wedding. Delightful, delightful world! Friends together going to a party. So gay, vivacious, loquacious, the carriageful of girls. And the gentlemen on horseback, riding ahead, abreast of the windows, jesting, talking.

Pine Grove is in a commotion and a whirl. Company flows into its hospitable portal from all the neighbouring counties, relatives close and distant, friends of all descriptions, old people, young people, children. Fires glow on the kitchen hearths. Sheep are butchered. Venison is brought in from the mountains. Bear. The smoke-house yields up hams, the cellars potatoes, turnips, onions, sweetmeats of all sorts, pickles. A host of black people is continually occupied with preparing and serving food.

Charlotte, with all the other guests, is caught into the vortex of preparations for the wedding. All the bride's things must be seen, closely examined, exclaimed over, admired. The bridesmaids' dresses must be fitted, altered, refitted, adjusted. The marriage ceremony

must be rehearsed. Where will the clergyman stand? where the bridal pair? Where shall the bridesmaids group themselves? How shall the company be stationed so as to see? Grave questions. Joyous suggestions. Gay decisions.

The day before the wedding an army of volunteers rides off on horseback to gather greens to deck the house, cedar, pine, holly. A farm wain rumbles after them to fetch home the cuttings. In it are negro men and boys. for the rough work—climbing trees, loading, chopping A light snow the night before covers the countryside with a sparkling blanket of white. The snow is so thin that when the horses lift up their feet black omegas appear where the hooves have trod.

Miss Kitty Langley is the life of the party. Charlotte has never seen any one so full of spirits, laughter, life. The young men throng about her, press close to the flanks of her horse. She begins to sing. "Jingle bells, jingle bells, jingle all the way!" And the youths and maidens shout the air and the chorus. Their voices echo from hillside to hillside, making the horses start up in the pastures, and the sheep gallop across the fields.

And they come to the forests. They disperse. Some stand by while the negro men cut away at great boughs of cedar and pine. Some search for holly with the reddest berries on it. Others rake over the snow and the leaves looking for trailing cedar. Such shouting and laughter. Some of the ladies prepare the lunch, assisted by black boys. Fur rugs are spread on the ground in a semicircle, and beyond a roaring fire is built. Coffee. Soup. Roast sweet potatoes.

Charlotte sticks close to the Langley cousins. They go with Mr. Trumell looking for mistletoe in the high trees. Mr. Trumell has a pistol. He will shoot down the sprays of mistletoe, but they must be large sprays and white

with berries. Nothing else will do. They go some distance into the woods. The noise of the axes and saws, the reverberating voices and laughter grow dim. So silent and white and lovely in the forest.

Charlotte discovers that Robert Tirwell is walking beside her. She has not known he is in the group before. He carries an exceedingly long pole with a hook on the end of it over his shoulder. His red muffler hangs over one side.

"I think I can hook down better mistletoe than Mr. Trumell can shoot," he says. "At any rate, if any catches in the boughs of the trees, this long pole with the hook end will bring it down."

Charlotte catches her gown on a thorn. Robert loosens it for her. She need not take her little hands out of her muff. There goes a rabbit! Charlotte catches her breath to see the furry thing scamper away. Robert pokes down an old crow's nest with his pole. The sticks scatter all over the snow. They come to a copse where young cedars grow thick, dusted with snow. Robert holds the boughs aside so that Charlotte can pass through. They say very little. Charlotte's cheeks are burning. Tirwell glances at her with sparkling eyes. Boy and girl together, walking in the forest. The others of their little party are somehow not near by. They are calling. "Charlotte! Charlotte?" Charlotte is about to call a reassuring reply.

"Don't answer," begs Robert. "Let's hunt for mistletoe ourselves. Bring in a lot. Won't they be surprised!"

"Oh, but I ought to go to them. They'll be anxious about me."

"Pooh, you're with me. What can harm you? I'm a man. You're entirely safe. We'll get to the fire in plenty of time for dinner."

Boy and girl in the forest, searching for mistletoe,

falling in love with each other. Too shy to speak ; too young to know.

Dinner at the fire. A real camp. The flames leap up, and the blue smoke fades off in the high clear air. The great wagon is loaded with greens ; greens lie about on the ground. Unc' Phil, one of the slaves, has his fiddle. He tunes up. Jigs. Breakdowns. Reels. What glorious fun to dance in the woods !

Tirwell gives Charlotte's hand a meaningful pressure when he comes to her in the figures of the dance. They dance the Virginia reel as partners. "Gad ! Ned Steppleton's girl is bonnie !" exclaims Mr. Trumell. "See how Bob Tirwell is gone on her !" Kitty Langley peeps at Charlotte from under the rim of her bonnet. Very beautiful, Lotty. But Kitty is not jealous. Lotty and Robert, children.

Sun low over the tops of the trees, and crows flying low against the sky in the west. Evening. Time to start home to Pine Grove. The loaded wagon lumbers off, the negro men walking behind, axes on shoulder, singing. The young people on horseback cantering happily into the dusk back to Pine Grove.

In the evening the greens are brought into the house. Christmas trees, boughs, evergreens worked up into garlands and wreaths. The staircase is girdled with green, the hall decked, and the parlours. Wreaths in the windows, over the mantelpieces, over the doors. Holly and trailing cedar to set off the sombre portraits, Mistress Harvey Twitchell in a white drapery with a lily in her hand, Mr. Rayfield in his uniform, Mrs. Rayfield as a shepherdess holding a crook.

Aunt Towser bounces all over the place, her red cheeks blooming. Now and then she pops behind a door, or under the stairway, to take a pinch of snuff. Her whereabouts is proclaimed by her sneeze. But to-night she doesn't care, snuff and sneeze as she pleases. Mrs. Ray-

field stations herself in the dining-room, sending out waiters piled high with buttered biscuits, chicken salad, cakes, and jellies. The happy-faced black maids go to and fro with urns of coffee, chocolate, tea. Mr. Rayfield brews and brews eggnog and punch. Some one opens the harpsichord to play waltzes. Then Unc' Phil strikes up his fiddling on the landing of the stair. The bride will not come downstairs. She peeps over the banisters.

Mr. Trumell hangs a great bunch of mistletoe under the chandelier in the hall. The girls do their best endeavours to avoid passing under it. Numerous gentlemen watching for prey under the mistletoe. Charlotte forgets. She darts under the hanging spray. Like an arrow from a bow young Tirwell is upon her and claims his reward. Charlotte blushes like fire. She beats the jubilant boy away, pounding his chest with her fists. Oh, such laughter! Charlotte flies upstairs to hide. The gentlemen rally Rob a great deal. He doesn't care. He struts more proudly than ever. He has kissed a girl under the mistletoe!

About half-past nine there is a great noise without, shouting, the sound of wheels and horses' feet. It is the bridegroom. The party from Montgomery County has come. The big front door is thrown open. A huge oblong square of candlelight lies golden across the snow. The door and the porch are crowded with company to greet the new arrivals, the bridegroom and his Pa and Ma and a younger brother. Young Tony Lester wears a fur cap with flaps drawn down over the ears.

He stamps into the house. Mr. Rayfield clasps his hand. Mrs. Rayfield folds him in her arms for a mother's kiss. Young as he is, he has a full black beard all over his face. He is a giant, over six feet tall. Splendid young man.

A flock of young ladies fly away upstairs. Indeed, Dela must come below. Tony is here, and his Pa and Ma.

The house rings with voices and laughter, so gay, so happy, wedding eve, Christmas-time. But Dela will not budge. She will not come below. It would not be at all the proper thing for a bride to do. What ! Come down into the midst of all the company on the night before the wedding ? Down the stairs come the unsuccessful ambassadresses, bringing Charlotte in the midst. But she will not let Robert Tirwell get near her again.

So the house is decked. The young people fall to dancing in the hall, Unc' Phil fiddling on the landing above, and a dozen black faces of the servants peeping through the doors, happy, laughing, showing white teeth, darting in between the dances to replenish the fires and the tables with refreshments. New candles are fitted in the sconces and chandeliers. Everybody is so happy the night before the wedding.

CHAPTER VIII

EARLY January and warm weather, thaw after Christmas cold. The guests are leaving Pine Grove. Exodus of young and old, in carriages, by stage-coach, on horseback. The bride and groom, Tony and Dela, are returning with the Langley tribe for a visit to Wynch's Ferry. Dela takes a place in the Langley carriage which Clara gives to her. Clara rides a pillion behind her father. Little Sue also on a pillion behind Mr. Trumell. The carriage is not so crowded, still full enough. Miss Langley, Dela, and Kitty occupy one seat, Charlotte and the two cousins, Laura and Rachel, opposite them on the other. Tony Lester rides his horse close to the side where Dela sits. He cannot take his eyes off his bride. She smiles and smiles at him.

Warm sunshine, soft blue skies. Kitty Langley carries her guitar. Her fingers will not get numb if she twangs a tune, and she does, and sings. Aunt Maria unbends sufficiently to nod her head in time to the music. The girls sing. What a happy carriageful rumbling over the roads flooded with mellow winter sunshine! What a gay, accomplished girl is Kitty Langley! How they all laugh when the carriage jolts and Kitty cannot keep her hands on the strings of the guitar!

Dela Lester carries her hands in her lap. She wears two rings. One is her wedding-ring. The other is a fine diamond, a Lester heirloom. "Every Lester bride for five generations has worn this ring," says Mrs. Lester, Tony's mother, when she gives it to her on the morning of the wedding. "Wear it until you give it to your son's bride, dear Dela." And Dela blushes scarlet.

"Dela, do pray let me see your ring," exclaims Miss

Kitty Langley. She props the guitar on the floor of the carriage and reaches across Miss Maria's knees for Dela's hand. "I have not had a chance to examine it yet."

Dela holds out her hand. She does not take off the ring. Kitty turns the outstretched hand back and forth, but the movement of the carriage makes it difficult for her to examine the ring on Dela's finger. "I vow it's a fine stone," says Kitty. "Pray just let me slip it on my finger." She tugs at the ring.

"My dear niece," expostulates Miss Langley, "perhaps Dela does not wish to remove her ring. You should not ask her to do so."

"Oh, no," replies Dela, "I am glad for dear Kitty to see it. I have no superstitions about wearing it." She slips the ring from her finger into Kitty's hand. All the ladies bend forward to see it closely. There it lies sparkling in Kitty's little palm. Magnificent! Kitty cannot bear not to slip it on her finger. She holds up her hand. The ring glitters in the sunlight. She holds her hand against the light, up to the window of the carriage, out of the window for Brother Richard to see.

The carriage gives a lunge. Kitty snatches at the window-frame to steady herself. The ring is gone, slipped off her finger, somewhere on the road. The carriage is stopped. The gentlemen dismount. They search and search every inch of the road. No ring. Kitty sobs aloud. Poor Dela buries her face in her hands. Charlotte is so very sorry for her. No words to comfort anybody. Miss Langley gives Kitty a sharp reprimand, then tightens her thin lips in a stony silence. All the gay spirits of the party are gone. Sad, lamentable accident.

At noon the party halts for lunch by the roadside. The basket of refreshments is opened by Miss Langley. Sandwiches are passed through the windows to the gentlemen on horseback. Robert Tirwell dismounts to

lean against the wheel nearest the window where Charlotte sits. He tells her of Philadelphia and the University, of his friends in both places, of the gay doings in the city, of the great rotunda and the classic buildings outside Charlottesville. He is such a man of the outside world. Charlotte feels so inexperienced, such a little country girl.

Robert whispers in her ear, "I am going to pretend from henceforth that Charlottesville is named for you. It will keep you ever in my mind." And Charlotte blushes deeply at the gallantry.

When lunch is finished, the ladies alight for a little stroll up and down the road. They walk back and forth. The gentlemen too.

"Lotty, what is that shining in the hem of your cloak?" Little Sue bends down to pluck at Charlotte's wrap. Between the upstanding stiff little ruffle around the border of the cloak and the fabric itself is Dela's diamond ring. Now, how did it come there? What a mystery!

Dela bursts into happy tears. Kitty laughs and sobs with joy. The whole company rejoices, speculating, conjecturing on the accident. Miss Langley improves the moment with a moral. "Never, girls, never ask any one for the loan of their gems." And Kitty, weeping, vows she never will. So say they all. Soon merriment returns. The journey is resumed and sadness is forgotten. Buoyant, resilient youth. Happy party after tears.

Home again. Dear Belair. Charlotte runs into every room to see if anything is altered. Everything just the same. She kisses all Aunt Harvey's children, holding Baby Lucy closely in her arms. She visits the kitchen and the quarters to greet her black friends. She has so much to relate of the journey to and from Pine Grove, of the gay times, of the preparations for the wedding, of that event itself, of the Christmas, and of all the people

in the party. But she never mentions young and swaggering Robert Armistead Tirwell, though his gay face and happy eyes are in her mind's eye all the time. Sly puss, young maid, growing up, almost a woman. Sisteen years old.

In two weeks the Twitchell family departs, Aunt Martha overflowing with children in the barouche, Uncle Harvey on Martius. They are going into Franklin County. Uncle Harvey has orders for four portraits at the home of old Major Bumpsted. He will be there until spring.

"It is the next estate to Tirwell's," he remarks. "Since Mr. Tirwell died, Franklin Forest is deserted. Only the black people. I fear young Bob will find little left in his house when he comes of age and goes there to live. Major Bumpstead writes me that the negroes have taken the books from the library into their own cabins, silver too. There's not a soul in the house. It is never opened except by the old fellow who is butler."

"Poor young man! poor orphan boy!" sighs Ma. "I doubt if he will ever settle down to life at Franklin Forest. So lonely, so far away from friends and all he had ever known in his young life."

"If he dies without issue," continues Uncle Harvey, "the negroes go free and the estate is to be divided amongst them."

The barouche rolls up the avenue of maples, bare in the winter cold; out of the gate it goes and disappears from view. Charlotte cannot restrain the tears that spring to her eyes. Dear, dear children, and her precious little Lucy. Belair Mansion seems very quiet without them. Not a single guest.

A cold February holds frozen hands over everything. Frost, frost. Charlotte finds it so hard to settle down to a humdrum life after the gay times at Pine Grove, after the bustling visit of the Twitchells. Uncle Jemmy tries

to engage her attention with Horace. But Charlotte cannot keep her mind on the Latin verses. She is restless and abstracted. Sometimes she rides with Pa on her pony. The exercise does her good. It is a pleasure. The pony's name is Falcon.

Ma comes forward with a plan for work. Charlotte must begin a hope-chest. She must hem linen, sew and sew, lay things by for her future, for her wedding. It is the task for young ladies in their late teens. But Charlotte wonders if she will ever be married. Would it not be better always to live with Pa and Ma? How could she ever leave beloved Belair? But she sets to work. Black Prissy helps her. The days pass.

It is March. It is spring. The *élite* of the county prepare for the Assembly, the annual ball. It will be in the court-house. All important functions, all large gatherings use that commodious hall. For the first time in her life Charlotte is invited to the ball. She is a grown young lady. She is going to be present at the Assembly. She will wear her bridesmaid's dress, the blue silk she wore at Dela Rayfield's wedding. And how delightful! Tony and Dela will be there too! They are coming to visit at Belair expressly for the purpose of attending the annual ball. Their visit to the Langleys is over. They are proceeding homeward to Montgomery County for the spring.

Life is full of interest again. Charlotte sings all day long. How can she wait two weeks for the day of the Assembly? How can she abide until her dear Dela arrives? Impatient young lady! innocent, gay girl! Charlotte Steppleton sixteen years old. Miss Steppleton! And she will wear a turban at the ball!

CHAPTER IX

The night of the Assembly Ball. Millions of stars in a black sky. And lights, lights in the great windows of the court-house, on the high portico, on the steps and in the yard. Torches, links, carriage lamps. The county families came from every direction, the ladies in carriages, the gentlemen on horseback. The court-house yard and the street before it are alive with vehicles, horses, people. The black people—coachmen, ostlers, body-servants—are there in numbers. They build a great fire in a corner of the yard where they may warm their feet and hands. In the basement of the building there is great bustle with the supper. Hampers arrive, baskets, demijohns. Six or eight ladies direct a score of negro maids in the arrangement of the tables, in the serving of the viands. All Belair is employed on Assembly night.

Guests at the Mansion, ladies in the house, gentlemen in the office. Unlimited hospitality, welcome for all. Tony and Dela are come, radiant with life and happines Tony has shaved off his beard. He is much handsomer, much younger-looking without it. Dela is responsible for that. Kitty Langley and Mr. Trumell are at Belair too, come expressly for the ball. Kitty has her bridesmaid's dress to wear. Uncle Jemmy gives both the girls a bunch of new ribbons apiece.

Supper-time at the Mansion, but too many guests for the dining-room table. Unc' Isaacs, with numerous assistants, hands supper in the parlour, the library, and the hall. The company is dressed for the ball. They stand about in groups laughing and talking. Mr.

Trumell and Uncle Jemmy twit Charlotte. She will surely be the belle of the evening. To-morrow all the unmarried gentlemen of the county will be in love with her. Charlotte is so happy. She blushes divinely. Her first real ball.

Time to start for the ball. But where is Dela Lester? Ma finds her in her room. She is ill. So sudden. Dizzy. She just saved herself from fainting by throwing herself on the bed. Pray do not disturb Tony. But Tony is beside her. What can be the matter? She was so well an hour ago. Is it serious?

Ma puts Tony out. She will rejoin the company in a moment. Wise Ma. She asks Dela one or two questions. Ah, that! Never mind; it's all right. Dela's blanched face turns scarlet. She hides it in the pillow. "Don't tell Tony. Not yet; not yet. I must be sure first."

"Lie quietly here," says Ma. "I am sorry you cannot go to the ball. But it is better so. You will feel well again to-morrow. In a day or two you can well resume your journey to Montgomery County."

Tony wishes to remain away from the ball to be with Dela. But no; Dela will not permit such a thing. Ma, too, insists that he shall not disturb himself. Indeed, he must go to the ball. Mammy will care for Dela. Nothing serious, just a little fainting fit. She needs quiet and rest. Tony is at last persuaded. Off they all go to the ball.

Such a ball! So many people, so gay, so finely dressed. The candlelight flashes on the ladies' jewels, the uniforms and white shirt-frills of the gentlemen. And the music is so entrancing. One could not help but dance. Pa opens the Assembly with Mrs. Captain Bassett. Mrs. Bassett is plump but very light on her feet. And Pa wears his best uniform. Captain Bassett dances with Ma. Round they go in a grand march!

Kitty Langley is easily the belle of the evening. But

Charlotte is next. She is more timid in her gaiety than Kitty. It is her first ball. How she dances! Her fresh young beauty makes her radiant and sparkling with happiness! Young Larry Bassett, the Captain's brother, falls madly in love with Charlotte. But he cannot dance. He has no grace. He is an oaf. He roars with laughter as he tramps clumsily around, and his eyes devour the beauty of his partner hungrily. Not a sensible word can he say. He is heavily in love, at first sight.

But Larry has little chance. Charlotte is in demand. All the young gentlemen wish to dance with her. Many dance well, many have a good deal of social grace and are gallant. They compliment beautiful Miss Steppleton for every conceivable thing.

Quadrilles, lancers, reels; now and then a waltz. But waltzing is new. Few can accomplish the gliding steps, the swaying movement. None of the elders. Charlotte does not know how. But Tony offers to teach her. He takes her hand. He places his arm around her slim waist. Off they go. One, two, three; one, two, three; counting, careful. Charlotte is learning the trick. She is waltzing. How exhilarating it is!

Waltzing with Tony Lester, his arm around her waist, the pressure of his movement guiding her around the room. A few other couples are waltzing too. Charlotte is glad of that. Otherwise she would feel embarrassed in such an unusual dance, a dance in a gentleman's arms. Indeed, except for Pa and her uncles, she has never been so close to a gentleman before. One, two, three; one, two, three; Charlotte is still counting below her breath. She bites her lower lip, fine little white teeth bearing down, to fix her attention on the dance, not make a false step. The effort makes her pant gently.

Tony is very close to her. She feels the pressure of his arm. He leans down toward her ear. "You have it! You are waltzing beautifully!" She is so pleased. She

glances up into his face. His black eyes sparkle, such a curious light in them. Charlotte feels suddenly shy. She has seen Tony looking at Dela that way, looking into his wife's face. He should not look at her that way. His ardent glances should be for Dela alone. She becomes more than ever conscious of the position of his arm, of the directing force of his body. What is it Charlotte is thinking? Difficult to say; she cannot really correlate her thoughts. There isn't time. She is dancing too swiftly. On, on; round and round, dancing, waltzing.

"You beautiful little flower, you!" It's Tony! "I could kiss you!" No mistaking the meaning in the voice, no mistaking the significance of his arm. He gently draws her closely against himself.

"Tony! Sir!" Charlotte breaks away. She stops dead in her tracks.

But Tony laughs boisterously. He tries to go on with the dance. But Charlotte will not. She flies away to the phalanx of matrons seated against the wall. She is out of breath, panting, scarlet. Some instinct makes her silent. She flutters into a seat, holding her feather-wing fan against her face. What has happened? Charlotte's heart beats violently. O perfidious man, false Tony! O Dela, Dela! Have a care of your bridegroom. A new door is opened into Charlotte's life. The vista beyond is overwhelming, appalling. The centre of gravity of her young, innocent maidenhood shifts surprisingly.

When the ball is over and the Belair guests reach home, Tony Lester is quite tipsy. He cannot come into the parlour. Two of the gentlemen lead him off to his bed in the office.

Charlotte stands by Dela's bed. She is asleep. She is beautiful, and a happy smile curves her lips in a delicate bow. Charlotte breathes an ardent prayer for the young bride, then she slips into bed on the other side of the

chamber. Six sleeping in the chamber, but Ma has forbidden them to whisper or talk. They must not wake Dela. She is not quite well. She could not go to the ball, though she expected to do so and was all dressed and ready.

Charlotte lies in her bed, thinking and thinking. She must rearrange so many ideas. And she cannot sleep. But in the morning Dela is well again. She is up with the rest, laughing, talking, inquiring about the ball. "Could you persuade Tony to dance without me?" she asks. Oh, yes, Tony danced a great deal. He waltzed with Charlotte. Dela throws a gay smile at Charlotte, clicking at her with her tongue. Clk! Clk! But why is the child blushing so? Dela laughs aloud. Tony!

Before midday most of the company are gone. But the Lesters remain. Ma insists that Dela shall not travel until she is quite, quite restored of her little fainting spell last night. Charlotte sees the married pair through the crack of the library door, just as she passes by. Dela is seated. Tony kneels before her, his head on her lap. Dela is whispering, smiling. She ruffles his hair with her hands. Young bride and groom plumbing the depths of life's secret wonders.

During the rest of their stay Tony is very careful of Dela. He ever leaves her. But when he meets Charlotte, he has the grace to look ashamed. He casts down his eyes. But does Dela know all that is in the heart of man? Somehow Charlotte feels wiser than Dela. However, her wisdom is not happiness. Poor Dela, may she never have to learn that widsom. But Charlotte's heart is full of questions. There is so much to learn. Life is not simple. It is very complicated. Treachery and wonder.

Pa notices Charlotte's abstraction. "Did my darling enjoy the ball?" he asks. "It is sad to think that it is

over. But cheer up; there will be many balls in your life, chicken." Poor dull Pa. But Charlotte kisses him for his love. "Chicken, chicken," and he pats her little head so tenderly, so lovingly. Pa!

CHAPTER X

FOUR years since the Assembly Ball which was Charlotte Steppleton's first. Time passes so quickly. So many things happen. Charlotte is a grown young lady. Twenty years old. Ma takes her on a series of visits to relatives and friends. They go in the carriage. Prissy goes too. They are gone for weeks, into neighbouring counties and far away. When they get home, they find Uncle Harvey and his family there. It is not one of Aunt Harvey's confinements that brings them this time. There has been only one baby since Lucy, but the little boy died at birth. It is illness. Two of the children have scarlet fever.

It is because of this that Ma hurries home. She finds the house turned topsy-turvy, given over to nursing. It is Edward and Rayfield who are ill. They are kept in a distant part of the house. Aunt Harvey is with them day and night. Uncle Harvey paces back and forth on the front porch, thousands upon thousands of steps. He is so anxious. The medical man comes twice a day. No one has ever been really ill at Belair Mansion before in Charlotte's memory.

Ma turns Aunt Harvey out of the sick-room into the nursery. She installs herself as principal nurse. Charlotte is entrusted with the burden of the housekeeping. She feels very responsible and old. And she is so, so anxious over the ill children.

Mammy no longer lives in the great house, but in her own little cabin near the kitchen. She is almost blind.

She has a young granddaughter to live with her and look after her wants. But every day she hobbles up to the back door to inquire for the children. Often the other children are found playing in her cabin door.

Mammy tells them so many tales. She is very old. She has seen and known so much. Her father came direct from Africa. "Ma pappy wuz one uv de outlandish people," she explains. "When we chilluns wuz little ma mammy useter hide us under the chicken hovels when pappy wuz mad. 'He'll sho' kill yo'-all,' she'd say. We wuz skeered. An' I 'members sometimes pappy'd say he wuz goin' ter dance his country. Bless ma soul, ef he wouldn't snatch offen his clo's and jump an' dance all ober de place. Couldn't nobody stop 'im."

"Oh, Mammy, weren't you scared of your father?"

"Skeered ter death, honey. But ma mistress, Ole Miss, not dis hyar little Miss whar is yo' all's aunt, ma Miss, Marse Ned's mother, she took me erway frum de quarters when I wuz er little gal an' brung me inter the big house fer ter be 'er little maid. I been 'longside er white folks ever sence. I'se sho' done seed some days, fine days an' fine folks."

The children surmise that the present days are degenerate and the people an inferior lot. Nothing to compare to "old times." They hang on Mammy's words. She tells them of the time when the soldiers marched up the turnpike. She remembers the Indians. She remembers when Belair Village was all forest, trees, trees, and not above five houses in the place. She tells them about old Rachel, Mr. Blood's "ole witch 'ooman." And of trips in the carriage she has had with "Ole Miss," and "little Miss" too. "An' I laid ma babychile, sweet Miss Charlotte, on her mother's breas' de day she come inter dis worl'."

When Mammy grew weary of narrative, she would

cock her ear, pretending to hear some one calling "Chillun, ain't dat yo' ma a-callin' yo' all? Better run erlong an' see what she want. Mebbe hit's dinner-time."

But one day Mammy is not well. She will not get out of bed. Her granddaughter brings the news to the great house. Charlotte trips across the yard to see what is the matter. Mammy has fever. She talks, but not clearly. Her mind is not quite right; delirious. When the doctor comes, he goes to see the old negress. Mammy has scarlet fever.

Charlotte herself goes to her bedside. She keeps the cool wet cloths on Mammy's brow. She gives her her nourishment. She fans the hot black face. The tears start to her eyes when Mammy moans. And she breathes many fervent prayers for the life of her faithful servant. But in two days Mammy is dead. Charlotte herself sees her breathe her last. She goes back to the house and shuts herself into her room. She will not see any one all day long. She weeps bitterly for her beloved old nurse and friend.

In time Edward and Rayfield recover, after weeks. They lie white and exhausted in their beds. Death has passed them by, but he is not to be put off. He comes again wrapped in his cloak of scarlet fever. It is little Lucy this time. Precious baby, not five years old. She lives feverishly for three days, then fades away. O death!

Charlotte herself is next to fall ill, not seriously. The fever lies lightly on her. In ten days she is better, on the road to recovery. But she is very weak and so, so sad, grieving for little Lucy, grieving for Mammy. But Ma is so brave. Aunt Harvey is so brave. Life must go on, better with courage and cheerfulness than gloom and despair. Good-natured, motherly Aunt Harvey comes to sit for hours in Charlotte's room. When Charlotte is stronger, she brings relays of children with her.

The scarlet fever has left the house. There are one or two cases in the village. Old Miss Taploe has it. Miss Amelia Ann Buffard stays by her bedside, nursing her faithfully. But with the exception of Mammy, none of the servants catch the disease.

The summer passes. September. The Harvey Twitchells bring out the barouche, stow themselves away inside, and drive off. They are going on a long journey, all the way to Petersburg. Uncle Harvey expects to be busy with orders in Petersburg most of the winter. Perhaps he will go to Richmond in the spring. It will be a long time before they are seen again at Belair.

A cool September lays a trace of autumn on the world. But Charlotte is slow recovering her strength and spirits after the sorowful summer. She is so white, and she moves about her daily tasks so listlessly. Summon her fortitude as she will, Ma sometimes finds her weeping quietly in her room. Sometimes she goes to the grave of little Lucy to place wreaths on the fresh earth, returning with tear-stains on her cheeks.

Ma is genuinely uneasy about her daughter. Something must be done. She consults with Pa. Pa is going to Richmond early in October. Business. He intends riding thither on horseback, but he changes his mind. He will go by stage to Wynch's Ferry and thence by packet-boat. He will take Charlotte.

So Charlotte is going to Richmond. Such a long, long journey. She has never been so far from home before, nor has she ever seen a real town. Richmond ! It must be a sumptuous city, gay streets, mansions, shops.

Charlotte must have a new bonnet for her journey. She goes with Ma to Miss Taploe's shop to purchase one. Miss Taploe is sitting in a low rocking-chair in the middle of the floor. When the little bell trembles on its spring at the opening of the door, she casts her bleary eye aloft and her great goiter bulges out of the neck of her

dress. Miss Buffard is behind the tiny counter. Out she bustles to greet Mrs. and Miss Steppleton.

Though spencers belong to the dress of a generation ago, Miss Buffard still wears one. It is an affectation with her, for she is really patterning after her mistress in trade, Miss Taploe. But in place of that lady's mob-cap. Miss Buffard wears a high hat with a feather in it.

"Step in, Marm, ladies," she says, dropping a stiff curtsey. "Miss Taploe is not so peart to-day. The fever left her weak. Bonnets? Yes, Marm, ladies." And Miss Amelia Ann dips behind her counter into divers bins and boxes thereunder.

Out runs a gigantic Maltese cat and four capering kittens. They scamper for the protection of Miss Taploe's skirts like chicks for the mother-hen's wings.

"Tat, Tat," wheezes Miss Taploe, brushing them under the hem of her garment. She has not spoken to the visitors, though both Ma and Charlotte greet her politely.

"Oh, the loves!" cries Charlotte. "What is the mother's name, Miss Taploe?" Charlotte wishes to thaw the old mantua-maker.

"Tat," answers she testily.

"Excuse me, ma'am; did you say Cat? What an odd name for a cat."

"Her name is Tat!" cries Miss Taploe, clutching at the ruffles of her cap. "Tatterdemalion."

"Because she sheds her hair all over everything," explains Miss Buffard, coming up out of a box with a bonnet in each hand. She exhibits her wares. "I think the one with the russet ribbons would greatly favour you, Miss Lotty. But would you now prefer the green?"

"Want a kitten?" snaps Miss Taploe. "Amelia Ann, ask her if she wants one of Tat's kittens." Miss Taploe extracts a large pair of horn-rimmed spectacles from the pocket of her apron, sticks them on her nose, and stares

hard at the ladies. What an odd person she is! Ma cannot hide a smile between herself and Charlotte. Fortunately Miss Taploe does not catch her at it, nor Miss Buffard, who has dived into the nether recesses of her counter again.

Miss Taploe bends down. She brings forth the squirming kittens. Tat dashes out, mewing, meowing, waving her tail, circling around with anxiety. It is evident she knows what is toward. This is not the first lot of kittens she has had and seen filched from her by Miss Taploe. "Scat, Tat!" cries her mistress. She holds up her hands full of wriggling fur. "Take one."

Charlotte picks out a kitten with a tiny white star on his breast. "I'll name him Tatterdemalion too," she says.

"Suit yourself," said Miss Taploe, putting her spectacles back in her apron pocket.

"Poor Miss Taploe is ageing sadly," remarks Ma as they walk home with bonnet-box and kitten.

CHAPTER XI

New scenes, new faces, diversions. Richmond is just the tonic Charlotte needs. The time is spent in a round of visits. Pa's friends will not hear of them putting up at the hotel. So many friends, living close together in the city, not at all like the scattered families on the plantations in the country. Balls, theatres, shops, real churches.

There is a bishop in Richmond. It is a good opportunity for her to be confirmed. No bishop ever visits distant Belair. Church people must content themselves with little there. But in Richmond there is everything that the heart or soul could desire. Charlotte will be confirmed.

She goes on a Sunday morning to the new Monumental Church, built on the very site where the theatre burned some years ago, built as nearly as possible to resemble the theatre. In the wide portico is a monument surmounted by an urn containing the unidentifiable remains of the victims of the fire. Their names are engraven on the faces of the monument. Poor tragic souls, lost in the flames of the theatre.

The bishop is a most austere man. He wears most monstrous sleeves with little black silk bands at the wrists and lawn cuffs ruffled. His neck is swathed up to the chin in a high stock and his collar points stick up under his ears. He preaches a learned sermon, deducing heavy truths and morals from some text of Jeremiah.

Charlotte strives in vain to comprehend the sermon. She cannot. Perhaps she is overstrained at the holy rite she is to receive, and the Sacrament after the service. What singing! There is a choir. All the congregation seem familiar with the hymns and the service; none of

the halting stiffness of the Church service in the courthouse at Belair. It is wonderful, uplifting. And the organ! Charlotte has never heard an organ played before in her life. She could listen to its rolling, solemn music and never grow tired.

But come, the sermon is ended; the persons to be confirmed file up to the communion rails, Charlotte among them. Her knees tremble a little, but she is proud and happy, and Pa is smiling at her. Holding her little Prayer Book before her breast, she kneels down and the bishop lays his strong, quiet hands upon her head. "Defend, O Lord, this thy child . . ."

Such a solemn time. Charlotte will never forget her confirmation. But there are lighter moments, happy, gay times in the parlours of her friends. Charlotte attends the Cotillion, and the Assembly, and many smaller parties and entertainments, many of them given in her honour. The young ladies in the homes where she visits become her cherished friends. All the young gentlemen whose hearts are not yet attached fall madly in love with Miss Steppleton of Belair.

They pay her assiduous court, innocent, harmless, gallant. The parlour is full of swains every evening; some return for morning calls. Young Peter Somerset is beside himself with love. He never comes to call without bringing some sort of little gift, some token of his passion. A fan. Perhaps some flowers, or fruit. Once he discovers two white doves in a basket. Every act declares his infatuation for lovely Charlotte.

The packet-boat leaves Richmond very early in the morning. Charlotte is so sorry to take leave of all her dear friends in Richmond. There are tears, embraces, vows of friendship between the girls. The gentlemen appear downcast and despondent when they say farewell. There is a little crowd at the wharf to see Charlotte and her Pa off.

Peter Somerset is not there. Charlotte glances here and there for him. Every minute she expects him to appear. What! after all his attentions, the warmth of his expressions of esteem, does he care so little? Charlotte feels rather abstracted from the gay chatter of her companions while she ruminates on Peter's absence. She even has a queer little ache in her throat. She is downcast. Peter does not come.

The little deck is crowded with ladies and gentlemen. There is a great bustle on the wharf, too, people coming and going, baggage, freight. The captain blows his whistle. One last farewell, one final adieu, and Charlotte's friends step off to land. The whistle blows again. The driver cracks his whip. The gangplank is withdrawn. The two tow mules strain at the traces. The packet-boat glides slowly along the canal. Departure.

Charlotte stations herself in the stern. She brushes a tear from her eye, but she waves her little handkerchief gayly, waving and waving until the boat makes a bend in the canal and is out of sight of the wharf. Charlotte stands at the stern.

The canal is quite high above the muddy rapids of the James River at the left. The current sweeps the boughs of willows and elder bushes on to its troubled bosom. The motion of the boat makes the sluggish water of the canal slap and swish against the banks.

It is a beautiful day. Early November. Indian summer. Quite mild and warm. A warm reddish haze hangs over the hills and fields. The corn is stacked in the pastures, and the wheat and oats shocked. Eastward there is a faint blue canopy of smoke over the city of Richmond.

Charlotte stands at the stern. Pa is talking with some friends. They sit on chairs in the centre of the deck. They smoke long cigars. Forward a lady and a gentleman lean on the railing, their heads hidden by an open

parasol. They are absorbed in each other. The gentleman is talking, talking. Sometimes the lady laughs, rather too loud. Her laughter is not soft nor sweet.

The packet-boat follows the windings of the canal. They are well beyond the last houses of the city and the steep bluffs near by. Open country. Charlotte seats herself on a bench. She feels very sad. She tries to compose her thoughts. But she is thinking still of Peter Somerset. Why did he not come to say farewell?

Hark! Horse's hoof on the tow-path. A rider is overtaking the boat. He is galloping along.

"Upon my soul! Young Somerset!" Pa exclaims. "What brings you here, boy? We missed you at the wharf."

"I came to say good-bye!" cries Peter, reining in his horse. "I waited expressly until the boat had left so that I could ride beside you for a piece."

Charlotte glows with joy. How charming, how gallant of Peter! She stands by the rail, Peter on horseback, walking his horse alongside the boat. He takes a small packet from his pocket. It is for Charlotte. A tiny gleaming dagger with an embossed handle, in a red morocco case.

But at last Peter must turn back, after an hour's ride. The first locks are reached. He cannot go any farther. Good-bye! Good-bye!

"I'll never forget you, dear Miss Steppleton!" He leans over. He shakes hands with Pa. He holds Charlotte's little hand in a tender pressure.

She blushes deeply. "Good-bye, Mr. Somerset. Blessings upon you."

The lock fills. The boat rises slowly to the higher level. The mules are harnessed again. The journey continues. The lady and the gentleman leaning on the forward rail turn round. The Captain is calling the lady. He takes

her by the hand and leads her to the place where the gentlemen are seated.

"Gentlemen, this is my daughter Maime."

Miss Maime curtsies to each of the gentlemen. She is a buxom little thing. She has round red cheeks and a slightly turned-up nose, and she wears a pink dress. The Captain wishes to make her acquainted with Miss Steppleton, but Miss Maime is anxious to get back to her *tête-à-tête* with the gentleman at the rail.

"Your servant, Miss Steppleton, Marm."

The name reaches the gentleman's ear. He turns around like a flash. He is Robert Armistead Tirwell.

"Miss Steppleton! I should never have known you! Do you remember Bob Tirwell at Pine Grove? We gathered Christmas greens together."

Charlotte remembers. She drops him a curtsey. But he is changed too. So much older. On his lip the shadow of a moustache. Pa knows him too. He offers him a cigar. Robert accepts with the manner of a man long used to the society of grown men older than himself.

Alas, Miss Maime! Miss Steppleton has taken your companion. Tirwell has no eyes for the Captain's daughter any longer. He laughs and talks. He and Charlotte must recall so many names, so many happy recollections of the Christmas wedding at Pine Grove four years ago. He sits beside her on her bench, quite close, looking into her eyes, laughing, talking. The Captain's daughter pouts for a moment, then she flounces herself below, where her ma is knitting at the foot of the companion way. Thereafter she tosses her locks at Mr. Robert Tirwell.

How pleasant the day travelling by packet-boat up the James River canal! Mr. Tirwell will not stay below with the other gentlemen after dinner to drink wine and smoke. He comes right up the stairs after Charlotte. All the afternoon they sit and chat. Two elderly maiden

ladies on the opposite bench cast first curious, then censorious glances in the direction of the happy pair across the deck.

"Her Pa better watch out," they say.

Toward evening they are far up the river. Suddenly there is a halt, but neither for lock nor change of mules. The driver shouts and shouts. One of the mules will not pull. He stands stockstill. The driver lashes at him with his long whip. The Captain goes ashore to investigate. The poor animal is sick. Colic. His stomach begins to swell up. He lies down.

What is to be done? They cannot proceed with one mule to tow. They are miles from the next post. They must send the driver on with the well animal to bring back a second mule. The enforced halt is exasperating. Sleeping accommodations on the packet-boat are not the best.

In the meantime news of the accident has reached the neighbourhood. Black people from the surrounding farms and plantations assemble. The canal banks swarm with negro children, mothers with infants on their hips stand not far off. The men come closer. An effort is made to get the sick mule on his feet. Various remedies and expedients are suggested. Unavailing. The poor mule dies.

A commanding figure on horseback appears on the brow of the hill. He rides down to the level of the canal.

The Captain greets him: "How are ye, General Coleburn? We have lost one of our mules. There seems nothing for us to do but tie up here for the night."

The General dismounts. He comes aboard the boat. Young Tirwell springs forward. The General recognises him. They clasp hands. Robert presents Mr. Ned Steppleton, his daughter, Miss Charlotte Steppleton, to General Coleburn. The General bows low and waves his hat.

"This is my plantation on this side of the river," he says. "My house is not above a mile over the hill, yonder. By all means give Mrs. Coleburn and myself the honour of your presence under our roof. I will ride away at once and notify her of your coming. Horses shall be sent down for you immediately."

Mr. Steppleton is about to dissent. Miss Charlotte blushes charmingly. Mr. Tirwell seems extravagantly pleased at the prospect of spending the night at Elm Park.

"I will not take no," resounds the voice of the General. His full red cheeks grow redder with pleasure, with determination. "I shall take your acceptance as an honour. Your refusal would distress me."

Off he gallops up the hill. The sun is low. A chill November evening sets in. The black spectators begin to disperse to their homes. The smoke from homes and cabins ascends into the sky at little intervals far and near. Night is coming. Evening. Cold and disagreeable. Two negro ostlers arrive from Elm Park. They lead horses for the Steppletons and Mr. Tirwell.

At Elm Park the General is standing on the front lawn, hat off, glowing with ruddy hospitality, ready to welcome his guests. Mrs. Coleburn is at the door. Light shine in the windows. Fires leap in the chimneys. The two Misses Coleburn, Netta and Anne, flutter near at hand. Such a reception! Charlotte is soon in a charming chamber crowded with fine old Georgian furniture. A smiling maid attends her. Two little negro girls scamper in and out with every conceivable and inconceivable thing for her comfort.

Elm Park is a stately mansion, the finest Charlotte has ever seen. The big central hall is tessellated marble, white and black; suites of rooms open off in every direction. The library is stored with volumes in

mahogany cases from floor to ceiling ; French windows let out on a terrace. The dining-room is a spacious apartment, as large as a banquet hall. Robert whispers her that General Coleburn has his own racing stables and private race-track. At the end of the lawns, across the ha-ha, is a white marble temple in the Greek style covering a spring of pure water.

At supper, Pa and the General converse on political subjects, Mrs. Coleburn engages Charlotte in conversation about her visit to Richmond. Mr. Tirwell is expected to entertain himself with the two fair Misses Coleburn. But Mr. Tirwell is restive. His eyes rove in the direction of Miss Steppleton. How far away from her is his chair placed ! Such a supper ! The servants come and go with dish after dish, all sorts of delicious things in great abundance.

After the meal, Mrs. Coleburn leads the way for the young people into the music-room. The General and Pa foregather in the library for their pipes and whisky. Mrs. Coleburn opens the spinet. She herself is a good musician. When she has finished her performance, Mr. Tirwell exclaims :

" Mrs. Coleburn, ma'am, Miss Steppleton plays delightfully on the harp. Won't you entreat her to favour us with some music ? "

Charlotte blushes deeply. She protests. But Mrs. Coleburn leads her immediately to the harp. The Misses Coleburn insist with eager pleas. Mr. Tirwell urges. So Charlotte seats herself at the instrument. In the soft candle-light her skin is so fair, like delicate peach-bloom ; her hair, done in a cluster of curls, takes on the rich colour of bronze. She plays with taste and sentiment. The company is enraptured. Mr. Tirwell's eyes never leave looking at her fair face bent caressingly against the gold framework of the harp. She finishes playing, letting her arms fall to her sides.

"My dear, how lovely!" exclaims Mrs. Coleburn. "What an accomplished young lady you are!"

"Dear Mrs. Coleburn," stammers Charlotte, rising. "Now Miss Netta and Miss Anne must take their turn."

With pleasant simplicity the young ladies seat themselves at a harpsichord. They play a spirited duet, exchanging glances of love and pleasure with one another as they play. Their little white hands fly over the keyboard, their little fingers race agilely over the keys. The young ladies greatly enjoy themselves; the exhilaration of mutual dexterity enlivens them.

"Mr. Tirwell, sir," says Mrs. Coleburn, "now it is your turn. You must oblige us. Do not protest."

Robert flushes. The young ladies surround his chair. They add their entreaties to those of Mrs. Coleburn. They mention a number of instruments, but Robert protests that he is not accomplished. He does not play a single instrument. Then, he must sing. Indeed, he must. So Robert rises. Mrs. Coleburn seats herself at the harpsichord.

Her fingers stray gently over the keys. She finds a melody. The young ladies seat themselves. Robert stands beside the harpsichord. Then he sings a Scotch ballad, a madrigal, a little catch of love. His voice is quite true, quite sweet. His tones are strong. Pleasing tenor. When he is through with his singing, Mrs. Coleburn continues to play, inviting the others to sing. For an hour they have such a happy time, singing, choosing songs, old favourites, new and popular melodies.

Suddenly the doors are flung open. In marches the butler, Uncle Toby, bearing a vast waiter loaded with sweets, cakes, jellies, creams. Late supper. Humming, laughing, conversing gayly, the company turn to refresh themselves with the delicacies. Pa and the General come in from the library. The conversation is general, happy.

The hours fly. It is midnight when they take up their bedroom candles to go upstairs.

As Charlotte mounts the circular staircase, embraced on each side by a Miss Coleburn, she sees in the hall below the radiant face of Robert Tirwell, upturned, watching the departure of the ladies. She feels a gentle wave of warmth and joy steal into her heart, and she smiles down into the upturned eyes of the young man. In the most gallant fashion, ardently, he blows her a kiss. She is so happy.

The General insists that the guests shall not go on with the packet-boat the next morning. They must tarry a week, at least some days, for a visit. In vain to protest. Mrs. Coleburn joins her entreaties to those of her lord. The young ladies plead with tears and smiles for a prolonged stay at Elm Park. Mr. Steppleton gives in. Charlotte is delighted. Mr. Tirwell vows he is in no haste to return to his plantation in Franklin County. He is only too delighted to have the opportunity of prolonging his holidays before settling down at Franklin Forest for the winter.

"Seven miles from the nearest neighbour," he says. "My black people are very kind to me. They spoil me dreadfully. But just the same it is very lonely at Franklin Forest."

"Ah," laughs Mrs. Coleburn, "you must not allow that state of affairs to persist. You must be married. You must seek a mistress for your home."

The young ladies blush furiously. They cast down their eyes. Mr. Tirwell is one of the wealthiest and best-born young gentlemen in the State. His father left him with an untrammelled fortune, wide lands, many negroes, and Nature has endowed him with good looks, excellent health, gay spirits. He is well educated. His future is of the brightest. Who would not be happy and glad to share life with him?

" Yes, sir," echoes the General. " Marriage is a divine institution. You will never know what true happiness is until you have a wife of your own." The General beams upon his lady. She places herself beside him with proud affection.

But young Robert is more embarrassed than one could imagine. He stammers. He blushes. He has no words to parry the attack. He is completely at a loss what to say.

Pa claps him on the shoulder.

" Come, my boy," he says, " never mind the twitting. Enjoy your freedom while you may. Life's duties and responsibilities will overtake you soon enough."

When Robert plucks up courage to raise his eyes again, the young ladies have run off to a distant part of the lawn, arm in arm, like sisters. The autumn leaves fall gently about them. The sunlight plays its golden radiance over the fair heads and lays a carpet for the little footsteps. The elders with young Robert follow at a distance. They are going to visit the temple of the spring at a distance from the house.

At the temple, servants have preceded them. A picnic is laid out on a marble table. Cold chicken, beaten biscuits, cakes, fruits. The slices of crimson watermelon seem doubly red against the white marble. The yellow pears, the purple grapes, the red apples, all heaped in piles of abundant colour, attract the eye with their rich beauty.

The General speaks of his travels, in France, in Italy, in Greece. " The chairs in the dining-room," he says, " I had made from walnut wood cut on this plantation. They are designed after some marble seats discovered in Pompeii. My own carpenter made them."

" But first of all," says Mrs. Coleburn, " we must drink from this fountain. A toast in pure water." She dips up a silver gobletful, sips from its brim, passes it to each

one of the party. They all drink. "It is the custom and ceremony of Elm Park," she finishes, when the goblet is returned to her.

Robert Tirwell seats himself next to Miss Stappleton. He piles her plate with sandwiches, with chicken, with biscuits, with fruit. The Misses Coleburn act as waitresses. The General and Pa fall into a discussion of the science of hydraulics. They speak of the ancient reservoirs of Italy and Syria, of the Roman aqueducts, of the canals of Holland, of England, and the new canals of the United States. Mrs. Coleburn takes a plateful of biscuits and strolls to a little distance to feed some colts that are gazing wistfully over a fence.

Charlotte feels that she had never been so happy, so really content before in her life. There seems a new quality in living. What can it be? She falls silent, looking thoughtfully into the bubbling waters of the spring, musing, thinking. Why is she so restfully happy? She could sit thus for ever. If only this happy visit might never end!

And Robert Tirwell is silent, too. He, too, is lost in thought. And he is happy, so content, but only when he looks at Charlotte.

After a visit of a week, the Steppletons with young Tirwell resume their journey. They wait by the canal-side for the coming of the packet-boat. The Coleburns are with them. The girls swear eternal friendship. Mrs. Coleburn insists that Charlotte shall return another time and bring her Ma. The General kisses her finger-tips most gallantly, but Charlotte kisses his ruddy, fatherly cheek. Pa kisses Mrs. Coleburn's hand and the cheeks of the Misses Netta and Anne. Cordial adieux. Such a happy, happy visit unexpectedly brought about by the death of a mule.

It is the identical packet-boat they were on the week before. The Captain greets the passengers with shouts

and halloos. Miss Maime tosses her head. She is engaged in conversation with a strapping country squire. He wears rawhide boots covered with honest plough-furrow mud. But even Miss Maime cannot keep him from staring at the three beautiful young ladies standing beside the canal. Youth and manhood.

On the slow journey toward Wynch's Ferry, Robert sits with Charlotte on the deck. There is so much to talk about; first the kind friends left behind at Elm Park, next the country through which the canal winds its way, last about themselves, all about themselves. But Robert does most of the talking. Charlotte bends a happy ear to all he has to say. He speaks of Philadelphia, where he spent years in the home of his guardian. He tells of the gay life of the students at the University of Virginia, of the Jeffersonian tradition, of the classic learning there. Then he talks of his home in a distant county, Franklin Forest.

"My Pa provided by will that the black people should go free and the estate be divided amongst them if I should die without heirs," he says. "Many of my friends fear that the people on the plantation will murder me if I live there. But I am not afraid. My people are devoted to me."

As they near Wynch's Ferry, Pa invites Mr. Tirwell to ride on to Belair for a visit. "My wife will be charmed to see you," he says. "Make us a visit. It is as easy to ride into Franklin from Belair as from Campbell. I trust no pressing business necessitates your immediate return to your plantation?"

None at all. Robert is delighted to accept Mr. Stepplеton's hospitable invitation. One of his servants will meet him at Wynch's Ferry with his horse. He will ride beside the stage-coach to Belair. It is settled. Mr. Tirwell is in high spirits. Modest little Charlotte is full of joy in her heart. She does not even deny to herself now that

she loves this young man. But will he speak to Pa?

Suddenly the weather changes. Indian summer ends. A bleak wind sweeps down from the mountains. Gray skies. The leaves are brown and falling rapidly. Late autumn, winter at hand. Fires in the daytime as well as in the evening.

Mr. Tirwell has been at Belair ten days. He is leaving to-morrow. He has not spoken. Charlotte is sad at heart. How foolish she is! Of course Mr. Tirwell had no serious intentions toward her. He is but enjoying himself. Doubtless in Philadelphia and other cities he knows wealthy and fashionable beauties far ahead of simple little country Charlotte. How foolish is Charlotte to have taken his attentions to heart! She steals off to her room, kneels down beside the little chest of drawers with the bullet in the side. She pours out a flood of earnest, simple prayers. And she weeps a little.

Dusk is falling. Crows are cawing dismally in the maples each side the drive. Somewhere a calfless cow is lowing, mooing. Autumn. It is a very sad time. Charlotte kneels beside the walnut chest. A knock at the door. Come in! Prissy enters. On her face a wide smile.

"Li'l' Miss, dat young gen'leman's body-servant done gi' me dis note ter give you. Huccome he cyarn't tell yer hisself what he got ter say? Huccome he mus' write er letter?"

Charlotte looks up. Prissy lights a candle. She gives her young mistress a little folded letter. It is sealed. Charlotte breaks the seal. She reads:

HONOURED LADY:

I venture to approach you with my addresses only after the proper permission to do so from your pa and ma. With their leave I am fortified to offer you my heart and sue for your hand. The greatness of my

esteem is matched by the depth of my devotion, fair Miss Steppleton. May I trust that you will cast a favourable eye upon the suit of

Yours truly

ROBERT ARMISTEAD TIRWELL (flourish of pen)

Charlotte reads the missive again. Prissy is watching her.

"Is Ah gonner take back er answer, Miss Lotty?"

"No, Prissy, no; there is no answer."

Prissy is disappointed. Off she sets to interview the waiting body-servant of Mr. Tirwell. No answer to a love-letter! Disappointing in the extreme. "Ef my li'l' Mistess won't have de marster, Ah vows Ah don' want dat up-an'-come-fetchit nigger man uv his'n." Thus Prissy.

Charlotte stands quite still beside the walnut chest. The flame of the candle flickers in a draught. Deep in her heart is welling and flowing a great tide of devotion and love. She blows out the candle. She lays the little stilted letter against her cheek, against her heart. She kneels down again to offer a fervent prayer for Robert Armistead Tirwell.

After a long time comes another knock on the door. It is Pa. Charlotte starts to her feet. She throws herself on her father's breast.

"My darling child, little chicken, baby! Are you weeping? Don't you love him? Nothing shall make you marry any man you do not love. Come, tell your old Pa what is in your heart."

But Charlotte does love Robert. She is just so, so happy.

"Then come, my love; he is waiting for you. He is almost beside himself. Let me lead you downstairs. Come, compose yourself."

Pa leads Lotty to the door of the library. No light

within save the leaping flames of the open fire. He opens the door, gives Charlotte a gentle push, and retires immediately.

Standing on the hearth rug is the anxious young man. His face is full of hope and pain. Plainly he is deeply moved. He darts forward to where Charlotte stands just within the doorway. He drops to his knees to take her hand in his.

"Is it yes?" he gasps with passionate entreaty in his voice.

"It is yes!" she breathes in a little whisper.

He rises to his feet. He encircles her with his arms. On her lips he lays his lover's kiss, and breathes a vow of love. "My own! My beloved!"

"I love you deeply, deeply," falters Charlotte. Her hands find the back of his head, her lips his to seal her promise. Then, blushing deeply, she seeks to flee away. But Robert will not have her go. He holds her by the hand. He takes her again into his arms. He seats her on the settee, and himself on the floor at her feet. The firelight plays over his upturned face and sparkles in her radiant eyes. Lovers. Boy and girl together, so fresh, so young, so ardent.

Come Pa and Ma, stealing in to bless them. Comes Uncle Jemmy with a kiss for Charlotte and a hearty handshake for Robert. At the back door Prissy bestows her heart and hand on Lewis, Robert's black manservant. November night, all warmth within, all cold without.

CHAPTER XII

EARLY summer June. The roadside hedges are odorous with honeysuckle. Lush grass red with clover in the fields. The noise of the bees makes a pleasant humming in the air. Over cottage and cabin doors rose vines hang tendrils heavy with blossoms. The wheat is nearly ready for harvest. Bob-whites call.

Along the turnpike from Belair to Franklin County, Robert Tirwell's new carriage crawls. Old Uncle Mason sits on the box, upright, stately. It has been many years since he drove the Old Marster in coach-and-four from Franklin Forest to Washington. He remembers with pride the days of splendour when he convoyed his master and mistress about the streets of Washington, to the White House, to the Capitol; or visited in Richmond, Petersburg, and Albemarle. Now he is proud and happy because he has a new vehicle, spick and span from the carriage-builders' in Philadelphia, and two splendid young carriage horses. More than that, he has been to his young master's wedding. In the carriage are the bride and groom.

Great days at Franklin Forest. The whole house is open once more, everything clean and polished bright. All the servants are busy under the dignified direction of the old butler Hannibal. Maids run hither and thither from house to kitchen, upstairs, downstairs, peeping out the windows, watching for the arrival of the carriage and the new mistress. In the kitchen Aunt Christian reigns. At last she has come into her own again. To-day Marse Robert and Li'l' Mistess arrive; to-morrow much company for gay bridal doings, company gathered from the utmost limits of Botetourt County to Prince Edward, Mecklenburg, and Culpeper. Like "ole times" again.

Early in the afternoon, negroes begin to trickle toward the great house. Labourers from the fields, women with babies, with children. They bring presents, eggs, chickens, nuts, vegetables. Some have calf-bound books in their hands, books taken from the library of the great house to adorn the cabin shelves, now being returned. They gather on the lawn before the front veranda. All strain their eyes for a sight of the carriage. Here it comes! Here come Marster and Mistress! Uncle Mason is sitting more stiffly than ever on his box. His son, Taft, seizes the whip from the stock to wave and crack over the horses' backs. Here they come cantering down the road, in at the gate. Out of the carriage windows leans the head of Marse Robert, beside him the little bonnet of his bride. The black people begin to dance and sing. Some are shouting. They caper toward the carriage, accompany it to the door, hold the heads of the horses. They crowd around with eager joy to welcome the master and young mistress.

The carriage halts. Taft leaps to the ground to open the doors, let down the steps, stand by for the couple inside to emerge. Out springs the bridegroom. He turns to hand down the bride. She stands bashfully beside him, not knowing whether to laugh or to cry. The women edge closer, curious. The children race about the lawn, calling, laughing. Some one breaks through the circle. It is old Hannibal, beside him Aunt Christian from the kitchen. "Welcome, Marster! Welcome, Mistess!"

Mr. Tirwell shakes hands with them cordially. "Thank you; thank you, faithful friends! This is your new mistress."

Down on their knees they go, Hannibal and Christian, down on their knees, sobbing, grasping the hands of the young white lady and gentleman. "Oh, lordy, lordy, ain't we glad! We got er mistess now. Ole times will

come ergin. Dis here place ain't goin' ter be shet up no more."

Charlotte burst into tears of gratitude and joy. Such a reception! Her own people, the black people God is giving her to care for and train. Her own home, Franklin Forest, a great plantation. Seven miles to the first neighbour.

Robert slips his arm about her waist. He leads her into the house. The negroes continue their demonstration of happy excitement on the lawn. Uncle Hannibal throws open the doors. He displays the polished floors, the shining wood work of tables and chairs, the array of glittering silver, glass, and china in the dining-room. His work. His pride. A maid runs in with a waiter of refreshments. Uncle Hannibal pours out glasses of port wine. Charlotte sits on a settee in the great hall, so happy, so overcome at arriving home, at the joyous reception she has.

A young brown-skinned woman, tall, splendidly formed, comes to the door. She is dignified in bearing, yet perfectly respectful in demeanour.

Robert sees her. He beckons her to come forward.

"Lotty, my dear, this is Judith. She is the daughter of my mother's maid. She is yours."

Judith immediately takes possession of her new mistress. She helps her to take off her bonnet and shawl. She brings her a clean handkerchief. She unpacks the bags and boxes, stowing away the contents in wardrobe and drawers. She knows how to do everything with perfection, with exactitude, at just the right time. Charlotte loves her dearly from the very first moment she sees her.

All the late afternoon and evening the black people come and go. All wish to see the new mistress. Mothers bring their children to make their bow before her. The aged come to bless her. Old men and old women weep

with gratitude because there is again a lady mistress of Franklin Forest.

Charlotte has never felt so touched in her heart before, never so entrusted with grave and happy responsibilities. Her home. Her people.

CHAPTER XIII

HEAVY responsibilities for the young wife. Charlotte Tirwell endeavours to do her duty, to shoulder the grave burdens of being mistress of Franklin Forest. So much to do. She inspects the mansion from attic to cellar, the grounds from kitchen garden to the grass lots on the confines of the lawn, and the domestic arrangements in the back, yard, kitchen, cabins, smoke-house, hen-house, ice-house, and so forth. Then, she must visit the quarters. Are the people properly clothed? Are they well? Who is sick? Who is old? What can be done for the black people? All these things are the concern of the mistress. And she must visit the wife of the overseer, learn the names of the children, and win the confidence of these whites in the lower social order.

So much to do! And there is a stream of company, friends principally, not many relatives. The immediate kin of Robert Tirwell's line are very few. He is the only son of an only son of an only son. Three generations with a single heir each widen breaches in a family. But there are some cousins, from Prince Edward County, from Mecklenburg. They send family representatives to Franklin Forest to visit the young bride and mistress.

All summer long the mansion is filled with guests. The elder women advise Charlotte, each in a different way, how to conduct her affairs. It is a serious business,

life. But Charlotte intends to command and direct her own concerns. She is always deferential and courteous. But with the assistance of Aunt Christian and Judith she makes her housekeeping decisions and manages her own domain.

And Robert, husband and lover. He can never do enough for her. He buys a new suite of furniture for her chamber, new books for the library, new draperies for drawing-room and hall. If she rises to leave the room, up he starts to hold open the door for her. If she enters a chamber, quick as a flash he leads her to a seat. She is proud and happy and deeply in love with the handsome, clever fellow.

Robert consults with Charlotte about the management of the estate, about the welfare of the black people, about every detail of plantation life. And every hope and scheme Charlotte lays before her husband. She does nothing without his advice and knowledge.

The day after their arrival, Robert leads Charlotte into a great sombre chamber. The windows are wide open, the light streams in, flooding in great pools over the heavy bureaus, tables, and monstrous bed with the dark faded curtains around it.

"Darling, this is the 'chamber.' It was Ma's room, and Grandma's before her. In many respects it symbolises the seat of authority for the house, the throne-room, as it were, of the mistress. I did not bring you here last night because the room-over-the-library seemed brighter and more cheerful. But if you wish to occupy this chamber, we will move in here directly. What is your wish? You are mistress here."

"My wishes are yours, beloved. Do you wish to live in here?"

"I am so happy," answers Robert, "I don't care where I am if only you are with me."

"Then let us stay as we are for the present. We can

move in here when greater dignity and gravity are ours." She smiles at him.

Robert catches his wife in his arms. "Beloved! Beloved! I am hungry for you. If only we lived without a soul near us, not a soul to take our time, to occupy our thoughts, only just you and I. I love you! I love you dearly!"

"But we have necessary duties laid upon us," replies Charlotte. "Let us never forget others, nor fail to meet courtesy and responsibility. A selfish love could not last."

She does not disengage herself from his arms. Rather she relies more perfectly upon him. Her little hand with its band of plain gold seeks his cheek to caress it, to draw his head down to hers for a kiss.

Robert leads her to a cabinet, unlocks the door, and from within brings forth a small leather casket. The top is set with shells about a mirror. The quicksilver is splotched and browned. With another key he opens the lid. His mother's jewels, some rings, one or two bracelets, and a chain of gold. There are two mourning brooches, a pink cameo, and a set of old-fashioned hair-jewellery, earrings, brooch, chain, and bracelet. His father's seal ring is there, too. He takes it out and slips it on his finger. "Everything else is yours," he says.

Ma comes in August for a visit. She brings Dolly with her. Into Dolly's ears Prissy pours many bitter complaints against Judith. Miss Lotty does not need two maids. Surely her own from Belair is enough. But the masterful Judith pushes her quite aside into second place. Prissy does not like it at all.

"La, Prissy, you'd ha' better stayed wid yo' own folks at Belair," admonishes Dolly. "Niggers cyarn't change dey white folks fer no good. Plenty good enuff' husbands fer you at Belair 'mongst Steppleton niggers."

This makes Prissy toss her head. Plainly the world is

against her, even Dolly contrary. But Prissy is determined to eat her cake and have it too. Lewis is a good husband. She has no complaint to make of him. It's Judith. Uppity woman. She bosses poor Prissy.

The truth of the matter is that Judith has caught Prissy dipping a basin of cream from the milk pails, cream with which to lave her ebony countenance. She has heard it would improve her looks. Judith rebukes her sharply and threatens to tell her mistress on her. So Prissy pouts and does not like Judith. She bosses badly.

Ma is received with honour. She is shown all Lotty's new things and is overwhelmed with admiration and wonder. She commends her daughter on her housewifery. She writes some of her own recipes in the Franklin Forest recipe book. Aunt Christian is very deferential to Ma. In her she acknowledges a superior being, and Ma is aware of the excellence of the queen of the kitchen.

Prissy confides to Dolly, as the profoundest secret, that she expects to be a mother before Christmas. But Dolly promptly conveys the information to Old Miss, meaning Ma. Ma is horrified. She feels it her duty to speak to Prissy.

"You have been married only three months," she says. "I think you must be mistaken, Prissy."

"N'arm, I ain't," says Prissy. "I'se sure expectin' 'fo' Chris'mas. I didn't see no call ter wait fer no weddin' 'long as Lewis wuz dar, an' I wuz dar."

Ma is speechless. Poor black children! But Prissy should have known better; she has been brought up in the great house and carefully taught moral principles. However . . . After deep consideration, Ma decides the matter must be discussed with Charlotte; otherwise the young mistress might be unprepared and unduly scandalised at her maid's early childbed.

" Well, Prissy," says Mrs. Steppleton, " you will have to content yourself with remaining here for Christmas, otherwise you might have come to Belair with your mistress for the season."

Prissy hangs her head. She is disappointed, not ashamed. But Mistress Tirwell looks up in surprise. Christmas at Belair? Surely not! Her first Christmas in her own home! It shall be spent at Franklin Forest. She protests. Ma is masterful. She regards the matter as settled. The Tirwells will come to Belair for Christmas.

" No, Ma; I will not. And I must ask you not to reprimand my servants. You might have let me rebuke or punish Prissy as I will."

Hoity-toity, here's a wilful lady. Ma is surprised at the determined spirit of her daughter. She finds it hard to realise that she is no longer a child, but a matron and mistress in her own right. But Ma is little inclined to surrender.

" I shall speak to Robert. If he wishes to bring his wife to her father's house for the Christmas, it is her duty to obey."

" Pray, Ma; let us not argue the matter. Mr. Tirwell will desire to do as I wish in this matter. It is both proper and fitting for us to remain at Franklin Forest." For the sake of dignity and the proprieties, Charlotte never speaks to or of her husband by his first name except in the privacy of their own chamber.

Ma feels rebuffed. She is injured. She retires to her room and declines to come down to dinner. Charlotte seeks her out.

" I will not present myself at your table, daughter, until you beg my pardon for speaking to me as you did this afternoon."

" Ma; let us understand one another. I am deeply sorry if I have hurt your feelings. I owe you every love and duty, which I give. But I am married now and

have a home and responsibilities of my own. I insist upon the right to decide where I shall spend my time and how I shall order my servants. Come, dear Ma, let us kiss and be friends and not mention the matter again."

The old lady must give way. She recognises the right on her daughter's side, but she cannot forbear a few tears, nor Charlotte either, before they descend to the dining-room. Nevertheless, during the remainder of Mrs. Steppleton's visit there is a slight feeling of restraint between the mother and her daughter. Charlotte goes about her household tasks and duties with efficiency and dignity. Ma sighs a little. It is plain she is growing into an old woman.

But the sunshine of affection floods the place when Pa comes to fetch Ma home. He makes a visit himself. Two or three weeks. Something has grown up between Robert and himself, some esoteric understanding, some common sympathy. They sit with their juleps for long hours on the veranda talking. Politics; affairs.

Mr. Steppleton is much concerned about the times. Grave changes are occurring. He speaks with the judgment of long years and wide experience. The words "Federalist," "Republican," and "Democrat" are often in his speech. The slavery question between the Northern and the Southern States is an acute one, one Pa is sure will not be quieted long by the Missouri Compromise.

Robert warms to these themes. He recalls the great place his father and his grandfather played in national and state affairs. He aspires to follow in their footsteps. But so far he has spent his life on the edge of reality, the fringe of genuine politics. How to make himself known? How to bring a real influence, which his birth, education, and position warrant, into play?

The men, elder and younger, spend hours and hours in discussion and debate. Robert knows of a society

destined, he thinks, to be very powerful in directing political affairs. He came in contact with it in Philadelphia and Baltimore, before he was married. If he could return to those cities, he could inquire more particularly about this society, but he is now tied down to his plantation and virtually possessed by his slaves.

But Mr. Steppleton thinks the Masonic Order is a better federation, more dignified, more extensively known. If the finer spirits work through its organisation, the country may hope for peace and prosperity. The country must not be allowed to become too extensive, too unwieldy. Mr. Steppleton is not at all sure the policy of imperial extension introduced by Mr. Jefferson is the best thing for the future of the United States.

Here Robert radically disagrees. His Pa and Mr. Jefferson were intimate friends. He will not hear a word against extending the boundaries of the national possessions. It is essential for the future welfare of the people. Now the Monroe Doctrine . . .

The discussion is endless. Man-talk. Absorbing. Some times Charlotte stands beside her husband's chair, her hand on his shoulder, listening. How clever he is . . . such a wide outlook . . . he knows the great world. Surely he will go far in his day. He will rise, as his father did, to deserved eminence in the councils of the nation. She is very proud of Robert Armistead Tirwell. She tries to understand the talk, follow the arguments of the conversation. Impossible. She is called away about household duties too often ; she must fly hither and thither to her tasks. Woman. The menfolks pay no attention to her, save for an absent-minded caress, a pat, a stroke of the cheek.

Sometimes Mr. Steppleton and Tirwell ride off to interview the men on distant estates, scattered farmsteads. There is a political meeting at Rocky Mount to which they go. The speeches are fiery, impassioned.

Tirwell himself springs upon the platform to harangue the voters. He makes a good speech. Everybody applauds him warmly. He is a valuable asset to the brains and the power of the county. Pa tells how brilliantly he spoke when they get home.

September far gone. Autumn touching the woods and fields. Time for the Steppletons to return home. Out comes the carriage. Ma and Dolly within, Pa on his horse. And they depart. Franklin Forest is for the first time since the arrival of the young couple without a guest. How quiet! so peaceful!

As the carriage rolls out of sight beyond the corner of the woods, Charlotte lays her head on her husband's breast. "Darling, we two." "I must ride over to Lem Turner's," says Tirwell, "to see when the next meeting for this section is to be held. The election comes in November." How preoccupied he is! He kisses the top of Charlotte's head.

CHAPTER XIV

As a mark of the disapproval of domestic authority, Lewis and Prissy must go to the plantation quarters to live until after Prissy's child is born. Prissy cannot understand why she should be blamed. "Ain't Ah married to ma man?" she says. No more does Lewis comprehend the punishment. "Leave waitin' on ma marster fer dat black gal? Huccum wuz I ter know yo'all didn't want ter 'tice me?" Lewis is aggrieved.

With the coming of the autumn and the cool nights, no company, the young man and his wife must entertain themselves at their own fireside. Music in the evenings or reading. Robert has good literary taste. He reads well. He is surprised and charmed at the discovery of his wife's own wide knowledge of literature, English and the Latin classics. Pleasant times. Husband and wife by the fireside. Mutual love.

In the frosty mornings Robert rides about the plantation. He interviews the overseer. He inspects the cattle and the barns. He rides to the post-office, twelve miles distant. In the afternoon he is in the library, reading the newspapers, writing letters, casting up accounts.

Charlotte is always busy about the house and its grounds. She visits the negro cabins, especially where there are sick or old people. She directs the great activity of the sewing-room, the dairy, and the kitchen. Aunt Christian is a tower of strength, always respectful, always good-natured. "Yessam, Miss I sho' knows how ter make sally-lunn."

Judith, too, is capable and helpful. She looks after the linen and the house-cleaning. Under her able command

numerous maidens keep the house in apple-pie order. She is worth three of the flighty Prissy. Really Charlotte is not sorry to have the whimpering Prissy out of the way.

Uncle Hannibal is general of the pantry and dining-room. His chief business and joy in life seem to be keeping the silver shining in the brightest possible fashion, and the glass sparkling. He also superintends the dipping of the candles, no small task. The life of the plantation moves easily, but it is a great and a complex institution.

Early December. Charlotte is preparing for Christmas. Immense preparations for food and feasting. Robert's guardian and his wife and son are expected from Philadelphia for Christmas and January. Two negro men spend all their time sawing and cutting wood. The woodpile behind the kitchen grows higher and higher, to alpine proportions. Teams haul in the fresh-cut logs from the woodlands two miles away.

There is hunting—birds, rabbits. Robert is out nearly every day with his gun. Home, with the game bag full of feathery partridges, and limp, tan rabbits. Two little negro girls dress the game for Aunt Christian's roaring fires.

Disappointment. The Philadelphia company so long expected cannot come. Influenza has put the entire household in bed. They dare not attempt a journey in the winter. So far from Philadelphia to Virginia. Tirwell is greatly chagrined. Charlotte shares his regret. No company for Christmas!

"Then you shall go home to spend the time with your Pa and Ma," declares Robert. "This lonely plantation is no place for you at Christmas-time."

"But, dearest, I am not lonely. I have you. It is enough. I am content. What more could I desire than the society and love of my husband?"

"Thank you, Lotty, but I won't hear of your remaining here. I will take you to Belair myself on my way to Philadelphia."

Tears spring to Charlotte's eyes. What? is he going to be separated from her the very first Christmas they are married? Does he understand what it means to her to be with him, his wife? Moreover, she will not go to Belair, not after her stand on that subject with Ma.

"Yes," pursues Robert. "I shall be glad to visit Philadelphia. Country life is monotonous. I really must see how my guardian does. Can you be ready to start the first of next week?"

O cruel! Thoughtless man! Charlotte puts the hem of her handkerchief between her teeth. She bites down hard to keep the tears from falling. Must she openly withstand him? Must she point-blank refuse to go to Belair? Or has she to explain his duty to him, recall him to his duty and position of a husband to her? Poor child! She is cut to the heart.

Into the quandary Fate thrusts a head. The very next morning in at the gate drives the barouche filled with Twitchells, Uncle Harvey riding close behind. Surprise! Charlotte throws herself with joy on the breast of Aunt Martha, into the arms of Uncle Harvey. The children clamber around her.

"We are coming back from Eastern Virginia," explains Uncle Harvey. "We proposed stopping at Judge Langley's in Wynch's Ferry, but the thought struck us to come pay you a visit, dearie, in your own home. Are you glad to see us?"

Glad? Angels from heaven could not be more welcome! The visit is the solution of where to spend Christmas. Now, Robert will have to remain at home. He could not go away now.

But no! Robert explains how glad he is to see Uncle Harvey, have them all at Franklin Forest. He has

relatives in Philadelphia who are ill. He is posting off to see them. It will save him time if he does not have to go out of his way to escort Charlotte to Belair. The Harvey Twitchells are ample company for her. They will not be lonely.

Uncle Harvey sees Charlotte's blanched face. Her agonised eyes. He suspects there is something awry. The first moment he can, after the hubbub of arrival is over, he draws Charlotte aside.

" What is it, chicken ? Come, tell your Uncle Harvey all about it."

And Charlotte does. She hides her face against his coat. She pours out her story, her distress. " I think he does not love me any more."

" Nonsense ! " cries Uncle Harvey. " The man is just thoughtless. He is just so sure of your love, so secure in his wedlock, that he has not thought of your feelings. But, damme, he shall ! I'll shake a little sense into his silly pate. Damme, he's a married man ! " Uncle Harvey is wroth. He pats Charlotte smartly on the shoulder " Cheer up, darling, I am sure one hint will bring that young coxcomb to his knees before you."

Uncle Harvey is as good as his word. Young Rob is filled with remorse. He humbles himself abjectly. Of course he was thoughtless. Of course it was farthest from his mind that Charlotte would not wish to return to Belair for Christmas, especially since it seemed he could provide no company for her at Franklin Forest.

On Christmas morning a team drives up to the door. On the wagon is a huge, monstrous box. Ten men bring it in the house. Such a noise of banging and knocking to get it open. A pianoforte ! Ebony, shining carved legs, glowing ivory keys, filigree-work music rest ! A pianoforte !

" All the way from Philadelphia, my dear one," says Robert. " The days of spinets and harpsichords are

ended. This is the newest fashion in the polite world. It is your very own, beloved, your very own."

For love and tears Charlotte cannot contain herself. Oh, the thoughtful, generous husband and lover! Hers!

While the men are clearing away the boards and packing, while the Twitchells one and all stand around the wonderful present, Robert leads Charlotte into another room.

"Beloved! Beloved! say you love me better than anything else in the world. I am yours, absolutely, perpetually, unreservedly yours." And Robert sinks to his knees, hiding his face in the folds of his dear one's dress.

Charlotte is sure it is the most blessed Christmas ever she spent, and the gayest, in the midst of her own home, husband and kin beside her. Robert says Uncle Harvey brews the best eggnog he ever tasted in his life. And he drinks a great deal of it. So does Uncle Harvey.

CHAPTER XV

THE winter is over. June. Sound of cow-bells from distant pastures, so sweet, so far, and placid. Franklin Forest under the noonday sun. Mistress Robert Tirwell, habited for a journey, is walking up and down the veranda. The early lunch is over. Uncle Hannibal's steps carrying the chinaware from table to pantry can be heard from within the house. Mr. Tirwell is in the library strapping up his saddle bags. Prissy sits on the kitchen steps. She holds her pickaninny on her knees. She is weeping.

Back and forth, up and down the veranda Miss goes. She is waiting for the appearance of the carriage from the stables. Judith comes out of the front door with the luggage in her hands. She wears a bonnet and shawl. She is going to Belair with Miss. This is the cause of Prissy's tears. Prissy may not go to Belair. Her infant is teething. She is not well. Miss Lotty will not hear of the baby travelling. She will not permit Prissy to leave her behind.

"Is your master ready, Judith? Has he any one to help him?"

"Yassam, Miss, Lewis is dar. He comin' right now. Here come de darriage, Miss; I hear de wheels a-rollin'."

True; the carriage rolls up the sweep before the door, Uncle Mason on the box. But Uncle Mason is not going to drive all the way to Belair; his son Taft is going to perform that function. It is his first journey of importance. The first time he is trusted with the carriage out of Unc' Mason's sight.

The house-servants begin to gather at the foot of the steps. Mr. Tirwell and his body-servant appear. Their horses are ready, too, bestridden by two small negro

boys. Uncle Mason lets down the steps of the carriage. Miss and Judith prepare to take their places.

At this moment two small children, a boy and a girl, dart out of the crowd of servants to clutch at Judith's skirts. Are they white or black children? Very light mulatto.

"Who are these children, Judith?" Thus Mrs. Tirwell.

"Dey's mine, Miss. Gonfrum hyar, chillun. Go back home." Judith addresses first her mistress, then her children. She pulls her skirts away.

Miss is surprised. She had not known before that Judith had children. And they are so light, such light mulatto yellow. The little girl has blue eyes. Why has she not known of them before? Where have they been all this past year? And surely they are some white man's offspring. Now, whose? Ah, Judith!

"Come, dear, we must be starting." It is Robert, his hand on her arm to assist her. "Judith, send the children back to your mother. Why did they come to the house?"

"'Deed, Marster, dey jest runned erway to see Miss git in de carriage."

In the evening the travellers stop at a roadside tavern. Two days' journey to Belair. All the way Mrs. Tirwell had preserved a complete silence in the carriage. Dark brown Judith the mother of two very light children, children of whose existence her mistress is until to-day unaware, and she knows of no husband for her maid. She broods and broods. It is food for thought. Disturbing.

After supper Mr. and Mrs. Tirwell retire to their chamber. Mr. Tirwell lights his pipe. He sits near the window, feet up on the ledge. By the light of two candles, his wife is arranging things for the night. Now she must speak.

"Robert, I have been thinking of those children Judith told me to-day were hers. I have never known before that she was married."

"She isn't, my love. But the coloured people have not the same standards as ourselves."

"Apparently they have," answers Charlotte; "those children are almost white. Their existence is some white man's fault. I wonder whose."

"Well, since you are so astute," replies her husband, "they are a white man's children. You know the plantation was without master or mistress for many years. I make one request of you, that you let the matter drop. Do not try to discover the parentage of the children. Do not be unkind to Judith. She is an excellent woman and servant. Now that you have her in the house and under your immediate supervision, without doubt the occurrence will not repeat itself."

Life's perspectives lift their distances to Charlotte's eye. Obviously Robert knows all about Judith's children. There is some secret there, something intentionally concealed from Charlotte. All life is, then, not marked off in geometric squares, black and white, never merging. Nature is sadly zigzag. Some instinct of pride and dignity, of purity and faith, holds Charlotte from uttering another word. It is best for her not to know or think of dark subjects full of mystery and pain. Daily she is a wiser woman, less a girl, more mature.

Belair, and Ma at the parlour window watching for the arrival of the carriage from Franklin Forest. Dear, dear old home! But just the same, still unchanged after the eternity of a year's absence. The servants crowd up to the carriage to greet "Miss Lotty." Tatterdemalion, son of the Taploe Shop animal, walks affectionately around and around his mistress. The hems of her silk skirts are pleasant to rub against. So cool in the wide hall after the heat and the dust of the road.

Charlotte is never done asking Ma questions, about the people of Belair, about the negroes, about the house and the garden, everything. And Ma has so much to ask, too, of Franklin Forest and the journey. Then, Charlotte is shown upstairs to her old room, her maidenly bower, but Robert is with her. He puts down his saddle-bags on the chest of drawers. Charlotte shows him the old piece of furniture. She tells the stories of the bullet lodged in the side. She says she hopes Ma will let her take the old chest back with her to Franklin Forest.

Downstairs, Pa and Ma and Uncle Jemmy conversing. "Much older, or is it matronly dignity that comes with responsibility?" says Pa. "Solemn and quiet she seems," says Uncle Jemmy. "Not the lightness and gaiety of our child." "Fiddledee-dee!" answers Ma, "she can't stay a child forever. Of course she is grown up."

Tirwell remains at Belair two days, then he rides away with Lewis after him to make a visit to Charlottesville, Baltimore, and Philadelphia. His eagerness to be off seems hard to his wife, boyish spirits to the elders. When he is out of sight, Charlotte runs upstairs to weep for him. And every day she writes him a devoted wifely letter. He will be gone till August. But can she bear the separation so long?

"I tell you, my dear," says Ma, "a woman has much to learn, and much to bear, and much to forgive." So wise is Ma. Charlotte never has felt so near to Ma before, so like a dear companion to her, as during this visit home.

The year at Franklin Forest, full as it has been, has been a lonely time. Franklin Forest is so remote, so far from the coming and going of men. The plantation is like an island cut off from the world by the sea. Robert has said so, too. He is restive away from the towns. He chafes to be doing important things; the routine of

managing the plantation is so wearisome. Yes, the year has been long.

" He should have children," says Ma. " That would interest and occupy his mind. Tell me, dear, is there . . . ? "

" No, Ma, no ! " And Charlotte blushes crimson. She hangs her head.

" Oh, my sweet, I pray God to bless you," is all Ma replies.

News ! The Tony Lesters are removing from Montgomery County to Belair. They are going to build a home at the foot of the Little Mountain. Tony is going to practise law in the village. Ground for the house is already broken.

The long-thought-of, the long-planned-for academy is at last to be a fact. The walls for the building are up to the eaves. A foreign lady is coming to be principal. She is Danish, but she has resided in America for years. She is very accomplished in languages and mathematics, a very capable person. Belair is fortunate to secure such a paragon of learning and ability as head mistress for the academy. But the two dame-schools must suffer. Ma does not know what Mrs. Tanner and Miss Richmond will do. They have depended on their schools ever since the end of Mr. Blood's. The city aldermen are negotiating with the head mistress of the academy for Mrs. Tanner and Miss Richmond to have positions as mistresses of smaller children in the academy. The matter is not yet settled.

Charlotte goes to see Miss Taploe and Miss Buffard. Miss Taploe is older, more crotchety than ever. Her goiter is larger, and she is nearly blind. Miss Buffard controls all the business of the shop. Miss Taploe gives Mrs. Tirwell a limp hand to shake, but Miss Amelia Anne kisses her cheek and calls her " dear Miss Lotty."

Pa seems very preoccupied. Charlotte notices his

abstraction and moodiness. He stays in the office all day, only crossing the lawn to the house for his meals, yet very few clients ever enter the office. Sometimes one must speak to him twice to arrest his attention. He sits looking beyond himself, seeing nothing, thinking. Charlotte mentions the matter to Ma. But all Ma will say is that he has many worries. What worries has he now that he did not have in the past? Charlotte is both mystified and troubled.

One afternoon she is walking under the maples, up and down the long carriage drive from the gate to the house. Pa sits at the office window, not the one on the street, but that looking on to the lawn. When he sees Charlotte strolling back and forth, he knocks the ashes out of his pipe, takes down a walking-stick from the rack, and comes out to join her. At first he says nothing, and Charlotte, too, is silent. She slips her hand through his arm and together they saunter up and down the avenue.

"Is my darling happy in her new life?" he asks at length. "I could not bear to think you were not happy."

"Yes, dear Pa, very happy. And I am happy to be home again, too."

"Ah, Franklin Forest is quite remote, is it not? It is lonely there?"

"I am very busy," says Charlotte. "It is a large plantation and there are many people. There is much to keep me occupied."

"Tony Lester is coming to Belair to settle. Montgomery is too far from the beaten track for him and his wife and their children. It has occurred to me that Robert might consider the same thing. I have hinted at the matter to him,but not gone into details."

"Oh, Pa, we could not leave the family home. We could not desert dear Franklin Forest."

"It is what the Lesters are doing. They have been living at Lester Retreat for four generations now, while the Tirwells moved to Franklin Forest only two generations ago. There are opportunities here for Tirwell's future which he could never achieve in the remote distance of Franklin County. We are more accessible to the outside world."

Some one shouting to Pa from the street-door of the office. Captain Bassett. He hurries away to let his visitor in. Charlotte continues her walk. Now and then, as she passes the open windows of the office, she sees the two men within in deep and earnest consultation. As Captain Bassett leaves, he wrings Pa's hand again and again, then dashes out the door, mounts his horse, and gallops away. But Pa sinks down at the desk, head on arms, shoulders sagging, most dejectedly.

Chalotte hurries into the office. "Pa, dear Pa, what is the matter? You have had bad news; something has happened. Pray tell me, if you can, what it is? Pa, I am so sorry for you if you are sad."

"Go away. Leave me alone, dear. Send me your mother. I should like to see her here."

Poor Charlotte is so distressed. She drops her little hand on her Pa's shoulder, then flies to the house to call Ma. Ma hastens out to the office. She is alone there with Pa a long, long time. Then the two of them come out together. They clasp hands like lovers as they walk toward the house. Pa's face is very strained, but Ma is brave and quiet. Charlotte sees that she has been weeping. Charlotte runs down the lawn to meet them.

Pa goes into the library and shuts the door. Ma leads Charlotte into the chamber.

"Your Pa has had bad news," she says. "He has lost a great deal of money. Five years ago he went security for Captain Bassett. The Captain is ruined and your Pa

must pay. It is a tragedy for us all. We have known for six months that things were not going well. It has made your Pa very uneasy and anxious. But still there was hope in the midst of the terrible anxiety. Now the blow has fallen. It is hard to bear, but there is no more anxiety and doubt. Poor Captain Bassett is in deep distress. He has offered to go to prison, but of course your Pa will not permit him to do so. They will try to renew life as best they can. It is very brave and fine of them both." Ma covers her eyes with her hands.

Charlotte is about to speak when Dolly runs into the room. "Come, quick, Miss, do pray come, quick. Marster done fell down on de flo' in er fit. O lordy, lordy-massy!" Dolly wrings her hands.

Pa has had a stroke. All one side useless, even the sight of one eye, and the hearing in the right ear. Ma summons a fortitude that is miraculous. She is brave, even cheerful. Her faith in God is strong. Faithfully she nurses her husband. The doctor says the effects of the stroke may pass off sufficiently for Mr. Steppleton to regain the use of his limbs; that is, if there is no further attack.

Uncle Jemmy comes forward with large sums of money, his part of the estate being largely in cash rather than lands and negroes. Belair does not have to be sold. But Uncle Jemmy now owns the plantation. Both Pa and Ma insist on that. Formal deeds are made out to him in the face of his protests.

The Bassetts are in deep distress at the misfortunes surrounding themselves and the Steppleton family. Mrs. Bassett becomes ill. She takes to her bed and declares she can never be well again. And the Captain seems suddenly old and broken. He stoops and cannot ride horseback any longer. If he goes out, one of his men drives him in a light carriage. Ma, with the fortitude of heroic virtue, goes every two weeks to visit Mrs. Bassett.

The friendship between the two families must not be allowed to break because of misfortunes which nobody could forestall or avert.

But why does not Robert return? Charlotte writes him of the misfortune and the distress and illness at Belair. Will he not please hasten to her side? But weeks pass before she receives the letter telling of his return and on what day she may expect to see him at Belair. His letters are full of the important doings he is engaged in in Philadelphia. He has even been to New York. He is in the great and important world. He has met Mr. Robert Toombs, the great politician and orator. He is absorbed in the political and social movements of the big cities. He is making speeches. He is writing pamphlets. But in August things will be quieter and he will come home.

August, lowering and sultry. Thunderstorms nearly every day. But they do not cool the heavy air nor relieve the summer depression. Charlotte is so anxious. She does all she can to assist her dear Ma, to keep her own worries and troubles out of sight in a house where troubles gather like dark clouds. Oh, if she could just have her husband with her! If she could just feel the strength of his presence and the confidence of his love. And now she knows certainly of a secret that is most important. But she cannot put the words to convey it on paper. They must be whispered into Robert's ear alone. She will not confide in anybody, not even Ma. Ma has enough on her mind without loading it with another straw.

Poor Charlotte feels very ill. In the mornings, when the nausea comes, she creeps away to hide from all human eyes. But the depressions that weigh down her spirits are much harder to battle against. If Robert would only come!

The days pass. Every day, every hour, Charlotte looks. out toward the carriage gate for a sight of her husband

If he would only come! How long can she keep her secret?

At last he comes, suddenly, at an unexpected hour, early, an hour before breakfast. Charlotte hears the clamour of the dogs and the servants upon his arrival. In a trice she is out of bed, struggling into a wrapper. Robert is up the stairs, tapping on her chamber door.

"Sweetheart, sweetheart, it is I. Let me in. Open immediately."

Quickly she runs to the door, slips back the bolt, and is greeted by the radiant, joyous smile of her loved one. He is covered with dust. He is very dishevelled. But he clasps her lovingly in his arms. "My darling, my darling, how I have longed for this reunion!"

Tirwell has ridden all night, all night, after only three hours' sleep in the late evening in Wynch's Ferry. As he neared Belair, he could not wait to arrive; impatience gave wings to his horse's feet. His love spurred him on. Now he is here!

Down he sits on a chair, his dear little wife on his knee, clasped in his arms, her cheek against his. She must tell him all. How tragic the family misfortunes! But the money is nothing! He, Tirwell, would have gladly taken up Mr. Steppleton's bond. Why was he not asked? Is it too late to do so now? Yes, too late! The legal processes are finished. And poor Pa is so ill, so ill. He has been in bed over a month. No better. He cannot move either his arm or leg on his right.

Robert's questions come fast. He wishes to know everything all at the same time. And he interrupts the telling with his lips on those of his wife. He strokes her hair, flowing loose on her shoulders just as she got out of bed. He clasps her hands, kissing the fingers. He is very much in love.

Charlotte receives and returns his caresses with gentle ardour. She loves him greatly. But how shall she tell

him her secret ? It must be told at the most favourable moment, but when is that moment ?

Here is Lewis with hot water and the saddle-bags for Marse Robert. He must dress and freshen himself after his night's hard riding. Charlotte must dress, too. Somehow in the extreme intimacy of the chamber, the privacy of their toilette, Charlotte shrinks from telling her news. A great reticence and modesty overpower her.

Dolly taps on the door. She has hot tea, eggs, and toast. Breakfast is not nearly ready. Marse Robert will be hungry. Tirwell *is* hungry. He will just get some of the travel-stains removed, then he will eat. While he is freshening himself, Charlotte goes about her dressing. She stands by the bureau, combing her long hair before the mirror. Combing, combing. The comb makes a little crisp sound as she draws it through the long strands of luxuriant hair.

How lovely and slight she is standing there in her thin nightgown and dressing-sack, her face pale, her ivory-white arms moving slowly back and forth as she combs her hair.

" Gad ! You are lovely ! " It is her husband. He comes behind her. Encloses her in his arms, turns her head around toward his face. " Kiss me, kiss me hard, Lotty, wife. I am your husband."

Lotty is faint. Her knees seem ready to give way under her. She puts up her arm around Robert's neck to steady herself. She hides her face against his shoulder. Now she must speak, and she does ; just a little whisper into his ear. Faithful, dear wife !

The deep red overspreads his face, deep pleasure, joy, awe. At last ! But why did he remain away from this dear little, suffering wife so many, many weeks ? He reproaches himself for his carelessness, his obtuse preoccupation over his own affairs. Faithful, dear wife !

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN the son is born!

Charlotte Tirwell walks up and down the veranda at Franklin Forest. The cool October airs blow the tendrils of her brown hair about her face. When the son is born! So many months yet to wait. But it is precious time. Robert is so tender, so loving. He cannot do enough for Charlotte. He cannot bear to be away from her an hour at a time. The morning rides over the plantation are cut short—just to the quarters, to the overseer's house, and perhaps the place where the most important work is toward. Then back he hastens to the house to be with her.

When the son is born! Robert thinks of little else. He talks of little else. Plans. Hopes. Schemes. It is the absorbing thought of his life and of Charlotte's. All is well with her. The fears and alarms and the morning sickness of her early pregnancy no longer trouble her. She is calm. She is happy. She basks in the love of her dear husband.

From Belair comes news of Pa's slowly improving health. He is still in bed. Now and then the surgeon comes to bleed him. Ma writes cheerfully. Every week a letter comes to Franklin Forest from her. Pa's bodily condition would improve faster if his spirits could be revived, but he is always so depressed. His cheerful resiliency somehow is not restored. But Ma is not anxious. Time and the love and care of home.

When the son is born! Already the wardrobe of tiny garments is being made in anticipation of the great event, in late March or early April. Charlotte herself sews on the little clothes, long, long dresses, soft flannel petticoats feather-stitched in white silk, caps, and little

blankets. Robert gets out from stored-away things of his mother the white satin christening robe with the old, old lace around the hem. Tirwells for three generations have been christened under that robe. The satin is part of the wedding dress of the first bride to come to Franklin Forest, and the lace came from Bruges itself. Delicate, beautiful, yellow with years. Charlotte puts the christening robe away in one of her own drawers against the day of the son's christening. She has brought her own little chest of drawers home with her from Belair to Franklin Forest. So often she fingers the bullet embedded in the side and thinks how she will tell her son, the tiny Robert-to-be, the romantic stories of how it got there.

October. Charlotte walks up and down the veranda waiting for the sight of her husband returning from his long ride to the post-office. It is the day for her letter from Belair. Robert is a long time coming home. Why is he so slow to return? In these days she depends so wholly on his constant presence with her.

Judith comes out with a shawl to lay about her shoulders. Prissy brings a scarf for her head. Judith's little girl, Maria, brings an eggnog from Uncle Hannibal. Since the return from Belair, Judith's children have been brought to the house. Maria is learning to be maid; Godfrey is apprenticed to the carpenter of the plantation. Both likely children, too intelligent for the field work and the life of the quarters. Charlotte herself is teaching them to read and write and cipher. They learn quickly.

"Hit's gittin' late, Miss. Dey's fog risin' in de bottoms. Hadn't yer better come in de house? I'll light er little blaze fer ye in the liberry?" Judith takes great care of Miss.

"No, Judith. I'll walk a little longer. It is pleasant here on the veranda. I do not think Master will be long in coming now. I'll wait for him."

"I'se gwine run down de road ter see ef Marster in sight," announces Maria. "I'll come give yer de word jes soon ez I sees him, Miss."

When the son is born! When the son is born! Charlotte walks up and down, thinking, smiling with contented pleasure. She makes a hundred plans a day for the coming son and as often changes them for others. Musing, musing. She walks up and down. The sun reaches down to the tops of the cedar trees at the end of the lawn. Long shadow lie across the grass. The maple trees are yellow and red with the touch of October, but the oaks are still a hardy green, only a browning leaf here and there.

"Here he come Miss! Here come Marster!" It is Maria. She is running up the drive from the gate. She waves her small arms. She shouts with delight. She has seen the distant horseman coming. "Here come Marse Robert!"

Here he comes! But how slowly, not with the usual brisk canter, the cheerful call, the eager love in his eyes. Some one else is on the lookout for Tirwell too. It is Taft, the coachman's son, who is fast succeeding his father in the care and work of the stables. He appears. He waits at the gate to open it for his master. But Maria has already swung wide the panels, leaving them open behind her as she runs for the house and her mistress waiting at the top of the steps.

Tirwell dismounts at the gate, gives the bridle to Taft, and walks toward the house. Something is wrong. Charlotte senses it by instinct before she sees it with her eye in her husband's face and manner. She clasps the shawl across her breast, coming down the steps to meet Robert, holding out one hand to meet him.

He speaks. "Darling, my darling, come into the house. I have something I must tell you."

"What is wrong, sir? Are you ill? Bad news? Tell me."

Maria's high spirits die away. She slips around the corner of the house to hide herself in the kitchen. Marster and Miss must be alone together. Maria is sensitive and gentle.

Tirwell leads his wife into the library. Already Judith has lit the promised blaze, pine cones and a few sticks. Robert makes his wife sit down, himself on the arm of the chair, her head against his shoulder, stroking her hair with a tender hand.

"Pray, sir, do not delay in telling me your news. I am brave. I can stand it. But suspense is almost more than I can bear. Tell me."

"It is indeed sad news," whispers Robert. "We must put our confidence in God and look to Him for comfort. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away."

"Yes, dear, I understand. It is Pa?"

Robert takes an opened letter from his pocket. It is addressed to him in Uncle Jemmy's handwriting. Inside, is another letter for Charlotte from Ma. Robert reads her the sad account. Pa is dead. Another stroke a week ago. Instant death. Fortunately both Ma and Uncle Jemmy were in the room at the time. He had been better all day, even bright and talkative, more like himself. "You are writing to Charlotte?" he had said. "Give her my dearest love." At that instant he died. His last words. He is buried in the family plot in the corner of the orchard, near the grave of little Lucy.

Robert reads further from his letter from Uncle Jemmy. All is well at Belair. Ma is so brave. Uncle Harvey et cetera are there. Ma sends her dear love. Her precious child must be brave. She must bear up as best she can, remembering the importance of her

condition. The letter Ma had been writing when the stroke came she sends just as it is with Pa's last words the last the pen wrote . . . " Your pa sends you his dearest love."

CHAPTER XVII

GRIEF at Franklin Forest. Charlotte Tirwell is weighed down by it. She wishes to return to Belair to be with Ma. But both Ma and Robert advise against her going. Belair would only remind her of her Pa and deepen her sorrow. This is a critical time with her. She must not come to Belair. And Ma cannot come to her.

Lonely, sorrowful days. Robert redoubles his solicitude and attentions for Charlotte. But the coming winter, promising to be early and severe, increases the bleakness and loneliness of Franklin Forest. Charlotte is not well. Her spirits are low. The morning attacks return. Robert would ask some of his relations to come to Franklin Forest, but he does not wish to put the strain of company or additional housekeeping responsibility on his wife.

But something must be done. Charlotte is losing health and strength through sorrow and loneliness. Try as she will, she cannot surmount the weight on her spirits, the sadness at her heart. The days of advanced pregnancy, the time of delivery, such critical periods, frighten poor Robert for his wife. She had better go away from home to spend the last months. The baby must not be endangered. The birth of the son must not be imperiled by the illness of the mother.

So Robert writes to Mrs. Roxana Macey, second cousin

of his father. She is a thrifty widow who has inherited her husband's plantation and manages it with much spirit and efficiency. She lives in the adjoining county to Franklin in the midst of a bevy of small and large children, growing sons and daughters. She is a veritable mother-in-Israel. Relatives as well as friends know her as "Coz," even the coloured people call her "Miss Coz." Her hospitable bosom and cheerful power will be just the place for the delicate Charlotte Tirwell.

Mistress Macey writes at once to her young cousin Robert, also to Charlotte. "Come straight to Coz. We will take the best of care of your little wife. I have had so many children I shall know exactly how to manage this whole affair. Do not delay a day longer. Come right to your loving Coz."

To Coz they go. Taft drives them in the carriage. They leave early in December. The roads are hard with frost. The trees are bare, lashing their boughs about in the icy wind. Judith goes, too. Prissy would like to have her turn this time, but she is expecting another baby herself. She cannot go. But that does not prevent her from hating Judith the supplanter. Small, very light mulatto Maria stands at the Franklin Forest gate. "Good-bye, Marster! Good-bye, Miss!" She waves her apron after the carriage as long as it is in sight.

"If only the son could be born at Franklin Forest!"

"My darling," answers Robert, "I do not care where he is born, just so you are well and in good spirits. You will be so much better off with Coz."

The carriage rumbles on over the wretched roads, sometimes through miles of forest, sometimes over open country, bare and icy fields. The December day is gray, the sky heavy with snow-clouds. Sometimes rabbits kick up their heels, startled from the sedgy ditches by the roadside. Once or twice Robert points out the lithe figure of a red fox slinking along a hedgerow, or pacing

away among the trees. Desolate winter in a sparsely settled, desolate land. Few houses. Deserted roads. Long journey.

Judith, on the box with Taft, converses amiably with him on a variety of topics mutually agreeable to them both. Taft has long cast sheeps' eyes at Judith, but the superior female has never associated herself to any degree with the negro men of the plantation. Because of her very light children, Taft and others universally regard her as a white man's woman. But on the carriage box, the lofty and refined Judith quite descends to Taft's chatty level. It flatters Taft.

"Yo daddy ain't so young as he wuz," begins Judith as an opener. "Ah reckons yo'all goin' be Marse Robert's coachman fo' long?"

"Huccum!" exclaims Taft. "Ma daddy plenty pyeart. When de good Lord calls fer him, Ah reckons Ah kin drive. Ah's drivin,' ain't Ah?"

"Sho is," says Judith. "Have er chaw er calamus root?" She tenders him her root. "Hit drives erway de misery."

"Ah aint got no misery," says Taft. "Thank'ee jes' de same. Ah chaws terbacky." No sooner said than done; a gigantic tear from a large brown plug.

Mistress Roxana Macey at Liberty Hall takes the Tirwells to her bosom, an ample resting-place both metaphorically and physically. She calls Charlotte "Chick" and "Chuck," and gives her a hot posset to drink after the cold and fatigue of her journey.

Liberty Hall is well named. The rambling old mansion overflows with people, young and old, black and white, all free to do just as they choose. Coz has nine children, four sons and five daughters, a biological chromatic scale. Her aged and indigent father lives with her, also any number of other people by courtesy known as guests. An unusually large number of coloured people

minister to the wants real and imagined of this household. Like a majestic galleon Coz rides the waves of her establishment, never fussed, never out of temper, always in the most jovial of spirits. She is a mountain of amiable fat, and her full cheeks are heavy red, almost bursting with laughter and smiles. She wears a huge mob-cap and carpet slippers, and carries on her arm a key-basket wherein are no keys, for nothing at Liberty Hall is ever locked. In fact, not a key or a lock exists in the place. But the key-basket is for form's sake and to accommodate knitting (never done), needles and thread and scissors, small first-aid remedies, coins, and a bandanna handkerchief as large as a small sheet.

What an altered atmosphere from Franklin Forest! It is just what Charlotte needs. Bustle of life and confusion. There isn't time to think with all the comings and goings and happenings of the place; how much less opportunity for moodiness and brooding.

The family and constituents of Coz swarm around Robert and Charlotte. They are swept up in the human tide of cheerfulness and health. Robert must hunt with the boys. He must ride with them to hounds. Long nights in coon and 'possum hunting. Charlotte must inspect all the concerns of the females—clothes, fancy-work, studies, music. Laura Macey develops an instant passion for her cousin. She will not leave her side for any reason. The twelve-year-old child follows the young matron wherever she goes.

Liberty Hall! Expansive place! Abundant in hospitality and affection. Huge fires blaze all day and most of the night in every room, and well they should, for few of the doors, outside or in, are ever closed. Too many people coming and going. Furniture and other appointments are heavy and battered, having withstood the attacks of several generations. There is no style at Liberty Hall, just genuine simplicity and good nature.

"I fear you have your hands full, Coz," Charlotte ventures when she first notes the swarm of people in the house. "It does not seem possible that you could take in an extra soul."

"Shoo, chick, my love," explodes Coz, "this is an india-rubber house. It stretches indefinitely. I am enraptured to have you and my dear cousin Robert here." Off she bounds to push back a blazing log that rolls off the fire on to the floor. "You just make yourself at home at Liberty Hall. I'll know what to do for you when the time comes . . . look at the brood I have hatched!"

The months spin by; January; February; March. In early April the great day comes. Coz sweeps the mansion free of hangers-on as she would have brushed flies from a table-top. The little room in an ell where Charlotte lies to bring her son into the world is as quiet and still as can be. Coz herself mounts guard. A medical man answers summons. Two experienced negro midwives are on hand.

Poor Robert is distraught with anxiety and excitement. He paces the hallway outside the door. Judith comes and goes with news.

A son! A son! An heir! The time has come. But, oh, if anything should happen to Charlotte! Robert could not stand it. He clasps his hands and prays as hard as ever he can.

"O God, forgive my sins. Don't hold anything against me to harm my wife. Bring her safely through this travail. Forget me and have mercy on her. Oh, if I had been a better man! If I could have . . ."

"Come! Come!" laughs Coz, popping out of the door. "You are a father. It's a daughter. The most beautiful little baggage ever I saw."

A daughter? Not a son? But the mother, Charlotte?

All well; tired, of course, but well and happy. Coz leads Robert into the chamber. There in the high

four-poster lies Charlotte, white and exhausted, and by her shoulder the tiny morsel that is her baby. Charlotte lifts her eyes to Robert.

" Never mind, dearest, we'll have a son next time," she breathes.

Robert falls to his knees beside the bed. " Darling ! dearest ! "

Coz lifts him up. " Look at this fine lady, sir. Say how-do-you-do to her. Isn't she perfect ? "

And Robert looks into the small, quiet face. The little mouth puckers up and a tiny cry is heard. His baby ; his little precious daughter. The great disappointment melts into a wave of paternal love for the child that is his. He takes the bit of flesh into his arms.

" God be thanked it is safely over ! " he whispers.

" Now, then, out with you ! " commands Coz. " Your time in here is up."

Robert places the baby in her mother's arms again. He leans over to kiss the smooth white brow. " My wife, my own ! " he says. " I love her dearly already. But I love you most of all."

Liberty Hall rejoices. Liberty Hall exults. There is a new baby in the house. All are so happy. Robert is so proud. Was ever such a baby ? Was ever such a mother ? The medical man assures the household that both mother and baby could not be better, everything utterly satisfactory. He mounts his gig and bowls away on professional duties elsewhere.

CHAPTER XVIII

The baby's name is Belle. From the moment she is born Coz calls her Beautiful, but Robert and Charlotte cannot agree on a name. Each wishes to give her the name of their respective mothers, Charlotte, Katherine. The choice hangs fire. The weeks pass and the baby, who began life so well, ails. The medical practitioner comes often in his gig. It is impossible for the Tirwells to leave Liberty Hall with an ill infant. In June, affairs take a turn for the worse. Anxiety and sorrow cloud the days.

"My advice is baptism," announces Coz. "I don't think ye ought to delay."

The pastor-in-ordinary for the county, the Reverend Mr. Meadstone, is notified. One afternoon he trails up to Liberty Hall, riding his lean white mare. He puts on a surplice as voluminous as banks of cloud and stalks into the room where the baby lies. Charlotte stands by, holding a silver basin of water, Robert on his knees by the crib, the rest of the household, as many as can, squeeze in the doorway.

"Name this child."

The matter is not decided. Neither parent answers. They look with consternation into each other's eyes. What shall she be called? The time has come. The parson waits, hand in water, hawk eyes fixed on Coz.

"Belle!" says Coz. "Because she is beautiful."

"Belle, I baptize thee . . ."

So Belle she is, and immediately she mends. Day after day the baby improves. There is deep rejoicing.

After all these months, Robert must return to Franklin Forest. So much for him to attend to there.

He has been away six months. But Charlotte must stay with Belle at Liberty Hall until she is quite out of danger, quite safe to be taken home. Lewis comes with a horse for his master, and Robert rides away home. Charlotte with Belle in her arms stands with tear-blurred eyes watching him pass out of sight.

" Now, Chuck, we are going to make the fresh barley water for Beautiful. Dry your tears and come inside with me." Coz reasserts her cheerful domination. The ebb and flow of wholesome, happy life at Liberty Hall resumes its way. And Charlotte is content for she has her baby. And Belle daily improves and grows and is the liveliest thing imaginable.

In August the whole State of Virginia is convulsed by the news of the insurrection in Southampton County. Negroes, led by one of their fanatical preachers named Nat Turner, attempt to massacre the whites. Men, women, and children, whole families, are butchered in cold blood. It is all done by sudden surprise. No warning. Inconceivable state of affairs. Southampton County is panic-stricken. The State is horrified. The militia is called out to restore order. Even North Carolina sends troops into the afflicted area.

What must one expect in a vast country sparsely settled by white people and teeming with negroes? Where will the insurrection extend? To what lengths will the drink-crazed fanaticism of the black people go?

It is a flash in the pan, but a very horrifying one. What negroes are affected by it? Whose black people are faithful? Everybody is talking about the Turner family upon whom the attack began. What white people are safe? But soon the ruffians are scattered. Many are captured and brought to justice. The black prophet, Nat Turner, a veritable fiend, eludes capture. He is hunted for high and low, hounded like a wild

animal. Where is he? Where does he hide? Where might he not turn up with his bloody hands and satanic cry?

"My dear husband; I must return to his side immediately," declares Charlotte Tirwell. "He is alone at home. I cannot leave him any longer."

"Think well, dear Chick," says Coz. "Is it not dangerous for you to travel alone so far? Why should you endanger yourself and the dear little baby by returning to Franklin Forest? Remember the terms of your father-in-law's will; if Robert dies without heirs, the whole property goes to the black people and they are free. Is this the time to tempt Providence?"

"It is for my husband's sake. I do not fear the negroes. Both he and I would trust our black people as we would ourselves. Taft is thoroughly reliable and Judith is with me. I cannot be easy to be separated from Mr. Tirwell any longer."

Secretly Coz shares the same sentiments. She trusts her own negroes and she trusts both Taft and Judith. They are too obviously devoted to their master and mistress for Coz to feel the slightest misgiving or alarm. If the other Tirwell negroes are like them, truly there is nothing to fear. But the long journey through the desolate country . . .? Still, Southampton County and the disturbed region of the insurrection is a long way off.

The Tirwell carriage is ordered out. The journey is begun. Taft is on the box; Judith is inside with her mistress and the baby. The weather is fine. The woods and fields are heavy with lush summer. Peace broods over the countryside. It is very pleasant travelling home.

"Judith, what is that on your finger? I did not know you wore a ring?"

"Yassam," says Judith, casting down her eyes. "Yassam, I does. Dis here is my weddin' ring. Taft an' me is done gone an' got married."

"You amaze me, Judith!" exclaims the mistress. "Without my knowledge! Without my permission, or that of your master; and when we are away from home too!"

"Yassam, Miss. I done tole dat black man yo' all wouldn't like hit 'ceppen we say so fust. But Taft say he cyarn't rest noways uv nights 'ceppen we gits married."

The inconsequential reasoning, the inscrutable motives, to say nothing of the naïveté of the match force the corners of Charlotte's mouth into a smile. She represses the amusement. It is a time to be severe.

"I am sure I do not know what your master will say when he learns of what you have done."

"Nor me neither, Miss," ingenuously replies the maid. "But seein' ez how I done had two chillun widdout no husband, Ah reckons hit's better ter hev dis one wid de husband on hand, an' Taft's willin'. Yassam, Miss we'se married, an' Taft he give me dis here ring whar he bought offen de gypsy."

The night on the road is passed at the house of a Major Headlam.

"La, Mrs. Tirwell, I wonder you travel alone with the black people, and to Franklin Forest too," exclaims the Major's wife. "You take your life in your hands these times."

"I have entire confidence in my black people, Mrs. Headlam," answers Charlotte. "They are faithfulness itself. I have no fear whatever."

Franklin Forest again. Home! The negroes crowd out to the front of the house to welcome Miss home again. They exclaim with pride and delight over the baby. "Li'l' mistess; li'l' mistess!" Prissy runs forward to greet her mistress. She has a new baby in her arms, but not so new that there is not another on the way. Prissy is prolific. Aunt Christian presents her

dignified self to tender her respects to Miss and to see the baby. Uncle Hannibal comes forward with a hamper of white kittens. "I done raise dese kittens maself fer ma li'l' Mistess Belle," he says, tipping the hamper. The kittens ramble feebly over the floor.

No danger at Franklin Forest. Confidence. Affection. Mutual respect and love between the black people and the white. "Tirwell niggers is de bestest niggers dey is," is the pride and boast of the Franklin Forest plantation.

When Robert hears of the alliance between his younger coachman and his wife's maid, he laughs heartily and gives them each five dollars. The carpenters are set to work to build a new cabin for them back of the kitchen near the smoke-house.

Young mulatto Maria takes baby Belle as her special charge and duty. The crib is piled with impossible gifts and offerings to the six-months-old child. Bouquets, bunches of coloured feathers from roosters' tails, sweet potatoes, coloured stones, blown birds' eggs, every conceivable thing highly treasured in the eyes of the mulatto girl.

Fall comes. Robert and Charlotte are lovers still. Each night they pray, "God give us a son." This time a son. Nevertheless, Belle is a queen in their hearts. Precious baby; innocent lamb.

News comes of the capture of Nat Turner. A Mr. Benjamin Phipps stumbles on him by accident. But the villain is caught. Under strong guard he is led away to Southampton Court-House for trial. Crowds swarm along the way. It is difficult to protect the fellow from violence. The public rage is great. But in due course justice takes its way. The negro prophet and murderer is condemned to be hanged. He is brazen and unrepentant to the end. On Friday, November 11th, he is hanged, with a number of his accomplices. They are

buried, but Nat's body is given to the medical men. A Dr. Massenburg owns his skeleton, and purses are made from the black hide. The Southampton horror is at an end.

CHAPTER XIX

THE years roll by, three years. It is 1834. There is a second Tirwell baby, another girl. She is given the name of Charlotte. Little Belle run about the place, light as down, fair as a lily, watched over, waited upon, adored by the faithful Maria, ruled over and instructed by the majestic Judith, spoiled and petted by sly, unreliable Prissy. And tiny little Lotty lies in her crib, cooing, kicking up her fat pink heels.

Belair Mansion is sold. Ma lives at Franklin Forest. Uncle Jemmy is left alone with his legal pursuits in the village of Belair. He lives the life of a confirmed bachelor in the office rooms on the street. The Tony Lester's house is completed on the edge of the village, and there they live with their three children, all girls.

"Is this to be a female generation?" fumes Robert Tirwell. "All girls for everybody!"

"Patience, dear husband, have patience. Let us trust in God."

"It is you, madam! Why can't you give me a son?"

And Charlotte hides her chagrin and grief in fervent prayers. A son, if there could only be a son! Two girls, but surely the next will be a boy!

Since Edward Steppleton's death, Ma is much broken. She is an old lady, and always in a black dress with a mourning pin at her breast. She cuts off her hair when she notes the gray appearaing, and of the fine brown lock a set of jewellery is made. It is for Charlotte . . . to

remember Ma. Ma is so lonely. The isolation of Franklin Forest makes her more so. . . . Black people, black people . . . so few whites so little company. It is not what she is used to.

But Charlotte does not mind the loneliness. Franklin Forest is her home, her very own. She bears its duties and feels its responsibilities. Always so much to do, so many things to attend to about the housekeeping, for the negroes, in the gardens, in the nursery. The babies absorb her time and her love and her interest, and she has her husband. He is like a big baby to her. She learns that he has to be cared for and amused just like a child. Charlotte is still deeply in love with him. She desires above all things to keep his affection burning hotly for herself. It is a task.

Robert Tirwell has a restless, eager nature. His loves and his interest are ardent. His mental and emotional curiosity are immense. As a young man the love of his wife, the love of his babies, the care and prosperity of his plantation occupy him wholly. During the years of the coming of the two babies, he is eager and expectant. He is content to remain at home watching and enjoying the miracle of child-bearing. But two daughters in succession disappointed him badly. Now, a year since little Charlotte is born, no sign of another baby to come. Must he be thwarted of a son ? Must the teeming of the family cease with two female children ?

Letters and messages come to Franklin Forest from the outside world. Robert's guardian in Philadelphia writes inquiring the cause of not seeing him for so long. His friends in Philadelphia wonder what has become of him. Is he going to settle down to life as a mere planter ? His means, his mind, his family history promise him a career in the world, something brilliant, sparkling, in politics, in law, in society.

Robert grows restless. He sits at his library desk

writing speeches, letters to the papers, pamphlets, what-not. But what chance is there for him locked away in the depths of rural Virginia, far off the beaten track of men and affairs, to get himself into notice, to make for himself a popular career? The truth is, the novelty of family life, of fatherhood, is wearing thin. Robert needs diversion, something to break the monotony. He writes and broods and ponders, but somehow he cannot bear to go away from home for a tour. Every week or ten days he hopes to hear of a possible son-to-be.

For the pleasure and use of the ladies, Tirwell buys a light pony carriage. They drive it themselves. It is more convenient than the family coach drawn by the heavy carriage horses that require the muscular hand of Taft. In the little carriage, low to the ground and easily managed ponies, Charlotte and her mother bowl about the neighbourhood. Little Belle in Maria's lap is taken, too, and sometimes Mrs. Steppleton holds baby Charlotte in her arms.

One day, Mrs. Steppleton, Charlotte, and the two children are driving some miles from the mansion. It is a lonely lane, rarely travelled. The road bed is short green grass between high banks of osage-orange and honeysuckle. How pleasant driving quietly down the fragrant stretch of lane, sunlight coming and going in splotches through the thick hedges above the roadsides!

Somewhere far away a bob-white calls. A catbird jabbers in the hedge. Now and then young rabbits kick up white tails and heels almost under the horses' noses. They scamper away through the heavy mats of honeysuckle.

"When your Ma was a little girl . . ." Mrs. Steppleton is telling Belle stories of her mother's babyhood.

Belle is never satisfied. She wants to know more and more. "And then, what then, G'an'ma? Tell Belle about the little red trunk of gold in the stage-coach, an'

the great big 'normous fat man 'at went bye-bye s'eepy on it." Belle knows all the stories. Much repetition.

Baby Lotty lies asleep on her grandmother's knees. Charlotte is driving. Belle squirms about between the two ladies.

"Dere's a man lookin' out the bushes at us," announces Belle, pointing toward the hedge.

Charlotte glances in the direction the little girl points. No one there. "Just some one working in the fields looking out at us, I expect," answers Charlotte. "Get along there, Molly and Tolly," to the jogging, fat ponies.

"Dere's that man again," says Lotty in about five minutes. "He's lookin' at us."

Charlotte looks up again. Indeed, there is a man in the hedge. He has parted the thick growth just above the point where the carriage is. He is a negro. His head is huge, and his eyes seem as big as saucers, red and terrible.

"Who are you?" demands Charlotte. She is frightened, but she puts on a bold front.

"Drive on, drive on, Lotty!" Ma is nervous. "Do not tarry for talk."

The negro's head disappears. He can be heard breaking through the thick hedge, running ahead. Immediately his face appears again, about thirty yards ahead of the carriage. Charlotte raises her whip to hurry the horses. The man leaps into the way. In one bound he is at the ponies' heads. They swerve violently. The light carriage careens. Charlotte springs to her feet. With all the force of her body she brings the whip down on the man's head and face, again and again. Mrs. Steppleton screams aloud. Then she faints dead away. Little Belle is white with terror.

Charlotte calls aloud for help. She lashes at the cruel head with all her might. The man lets go the bridle, springing aside. It is plain he intends to jump upon the

step of the carriage. Charlotte brandishes her whip. It is her only weapon, but the fellow has tasted its sting. He hesitates.

"Help! Help! For God's sake, help! Will nobody hear me! Will nobody come to our rescue?" It is Charlotte calling at the top of her voice.

Her cries frighten the black fellow. He steps back toward the hedge. Charlotte lays her whip on the ponies' flanks. They break into a run. The little vehicle bounces away down the lane. On and on. Charlotte sits driving as hard as she can. It is not necessary to ply the whip again. The ponies are badly frightened. They are running away.

Out of the lane into a highroad. The carriage seems about to overturn or be dashed to pieces. Belle is crying and calling. Mrs. Steppleton lies huddled over on one side, doubled over the body of the baby. Surely they will all be killed!

A heavy team is drawing up the road. The drivers see the runaway. Down from their wagon of logs they jump, standing ready in the road to catch the heads of the racing ponies. Two negro boys and a white man. The danger is over.

"Dat-ar man's Crazy Sam'l!" exclaims one of the negro boys, when Charlotte gasps out her tale. "He's plumb-crazy, Miss. He's done been locked up 'fore dis. He done runned erway from over Marse Lem Turner's place. We gwine git some folks an' go ketch 'im. Sho!"

The youth hurries off to the nearest settlement of negroes to muster help for the capture of the lunatic. The other black boy stays by the team and the load of wood, while the white man, a nephew of Tirwell's overseer and a tenant on a neighbouring farm, leads the pony carriage toward Franklin Forest.

"This settles it," declares Tirwell. "My mind is made up. This country is too lonely and dangerous for

you and the children. I have long contemplated buying a place near Belair and building a house there. Your Pa and I talked of it long ago. He urged me to consider it. Now, it shall be done."

The ladies and the children fear to go out alone again, though there is really no danger. The crazy negro is caught the same afternoon as the accident. He is truly a dangerous case. The authorities forbid Lem Turner attempting to keep him. It is not safe. He is carried off to Rocky Mount, the county seat, and locked up in the jail.

But the Tirwells have had a bad scare. They are long in getting over it. Ma is quite prostrated for two or three weeks. Charlotte herself has to keep her bed for a day or two.

Now Robert has an absorbing interest. He is going to move his plantation to another county. He is going to build a house. What an occupation ! He gives himself up to plan-drawing. He will be his own architect. Various personages come and go for consultation about the scheme. Land must be bought. Materials must be assembled. And Franklin Forest must be sold. No light matter to move an establishment in the year 1835.

In a year, in 1836, much has been done. First a contingent of negroes is taken to the new property near Belair village. Carpenters, brickmakers, masons. The red clay is moulded and burned into fine shapely bricks. Timber is sawed and planed and prepared for the building of the house. The family is to move in the fall. Tirwell rents a large vacant house two miles from the village. They will live there a year so as to be near the new home. Tirwell wishes to oversee the building himself, and Charlotte must be there to give her advice and ideas where she can.

The new home is to be called " Waverley," because of Scott's new novels that everybody is reading and talking

about. Tirwell buys them every one as soon as they are for sale in America. Waverley! He is delighted with the name. Waverley!

Robert rides back and forth between Franklin Forest and Belair time and time again until the actual move is made. He would like to be in both places at once. Wains loaded with furniture, boxes, barrels, bales, move slowly across the county. Black people with carts and wagons, horseback, afoot, take their belongings and themselves to the new plantation. It is a great lark for them. At last the great family coach conveys the family away from the Franklin County home. Robert rides beside it. The household servants are crowded into a large covered wagon which lumbers on behind the carriage. It takes the cavalcade three days to make the journey, so slowly do they move, stopping at night in hospitable homes along the way. The negroes camp in the fields.

Belair again! Charlotte has not been in the village since the summer Pa had his stroke. It is unchanged. The same scattered, simple houses, the one simple road through the town, where it is dignified with the name of street. And on its high hill the court-house, impressive with four white columns to its portico. Little new in the village. The Methodists have built a brick church on the site of the old Belair mansion. There are one or two new cottages. Miss Taploe is dead, and Miss Buffard now operates the mantua-making shop. She has painted the front bright yellow.

Uncle Jemmy will live with the Tirwells. He is in the door of the rented house to greet the family when they arrive. He attends to everything. Already the beds are made and the supper is cooked ready for serving. Aunt Christian in the kitchen; Uncle Hannibal in the pantry and dining-room.

And near by the village the rising walls of Waverley!

CHAPTER XX

THREE little girls in pantalets. They sit primly on three stiff chairs. The feet of the youngest are far from the floor, the toes of the second barely touch, but the feet of the eldest are planted firmly upon the carpet. They are waiting for Pa to come in from his library with the new preceptor of music and languages. To-day the education of the three Tirwell children will begin in dead earnest. The little girls sit awaiting the dread moment.

The door of the library opens. Pa leads out a delicate young man, slightly built but graceful. He is plainly nervous.

"Mr. Menckel, these are my daughters."

"How-do-you-do, sir," say the three daughters in unison, slipping off their chairs. "We hope you are well, sir?"

Mr. Menckel shakes hands with each very gravely, bowing low. He speaks with very little accent. His voice is low and cultivated. In a moment he goes to the pianoforte, the fine square thing Pa gave to Ma the first Christmas they were married. Mr. Menckel opens the ponderous lid, settles himself, raises two slender, sinuous hands. Then he begins to run his fingers over the keys, slowly, sweetly, feeling for a melody. It comes. Beethoven; Mozart; Strauss. Pa is delighted. The children lose their shyness. They creep close to the instrument. They stand close to the side of the music-master. He plays and plays. Charming!

"Now, Meez Belle, place yo' haands on the keys; so; ah! so. Do the keys not tempt the music? Can you play anything? Try; try for me. Lift theez finger, so; ah! so. Theez white keys are . . ."

Thus the music lesson begins. Each child is taught to place her hands properly on the keyboard, only little Martha cannot separate her fingers. She plunks pudgy fists bodily upon the keys.

Into the flow of his instruction, Mr. Menckel introduces German words and phrases. "Thaat means . . . yez; just what I say." And French too. The children begin to learn foreign languages, easily, naturally, hardly aware of the lesson.

Mr. Menckel is so pleasant. He talks delightfully of his home in Bavaria, of his travels, of his friends. He tells amusing stories of Germany and of France. The children love him dearly from the start. Their Pa and Ma are delighted with him. He is an asset to the family circle at Waverley. In the evenings he will sometimes play for hours in the dim light of a single sconce of burning candles, or the soft red light of a fire.

For the three R's the two elder children attend the Belair Academy. It is presided over by Madame Menricus from Copenhagen. She possesses a daughter, Miss Flavia, a gaunt young female endued with all the virtues and powers of elementary and advanced mathematics. Madame Menricus herself is very learned. She is very capable, capable as a schoolmistress, housemanager, and general utility.

One day the Madame suspends classes, drafts the pupils into assistants, and herself shingles her chickenhouse. The old lady is a most matter-of-fact personage. She hews to the line and lets the chips fall where they will. In school her penchant is geography and this is the scholastic *bête noire* of all the pupils. At home, Belle bounds Russia and Poland with minute accuracy, and Lotty knows the chief exports of Java and Ceylon.

The mother of the children is a busy mistress. From morning till night she is occupied with the vast affairs of her domain. So many duties about the house and the

garden, the dairy, the quarters, the sewing-room, and the pantry. Her mother dies the year after Waverley is built. The same month the third baby is born. A girl, another girl! What a disappointment! Will there never be a son?

The mistress of Waverley is now an established and capable matron. She wears a cap, young woman as she is, and she is called Miss by all the servants. In fun the same title is applied to her by her husband, and the children catch it up. Miss! The term falls easily and affectionately from all lips. And Robert Tirwell is Pa to his children, Mr. Tirwell to his wife, and Marster to all the servants. Miss and Marster.

It is pleasant living near the village of Belair. Not nearly so lonely as Franklin Forest. There are people coming and going. The monthly court-days are festive occasions. The country people flock to the village. The Tirwell dinner-table is crowded with guests. Pa, with Uncle Jemmy, spends the whole day in the court-room. sometimes there are political campaigns, meetings, speechifyings. Tirwell and Tony Lester, neighbours and cronies, are sharp-tongued opponents on the stump, rivals for leadership in the political affairs of the country.

Miss sees much of Dela Lester. Dela has now four daughters. She is delicate from child-bearing, but still she hopes for a son. Dela and Miss lament together the hard fate that ordains them bearers of girl children only. And there are deeper strains of anxiety and sorrow on that same account. Both husbands ardently long for sons, and being denied are inclined to blame the ladies. Dela confides to Miss her apprehensions for the love of her husband. Tony has cooled toward her. She has heard one or two ugly rumours of surreptitious visits he has paid to the buxom daughters of farmers in various parts of the county. And he is extravagant, too. He seems inclined to speculate. The whole matter is

the cause of great anxiety and misgiving to Dela. Her worry does not improve her health.

But the Lester children and the Tirwell children never dream of aught save childish affection and joy. They are devoted to each other. They play together under the chestnut trees at Bellevue, or the oaks of Waverley, watched over by the coloured women and girls who have the care of them. Judith gives her entire time to Miss and the more serious affairs of the chamber and the nursery. Her daughter Maria is nurse for the children.

Sometimes the family carriage of one or the other establishments, packed full of Tirwells or Lesters, will roll up to the door of Bellevue or Waverley and a happy, sociable day will be spent together. Sometimes Miss or Mrs. Lester will take all the children of both families, with an appanage of negro helpers, for a day in the country, a picnic beside some shady spring or rippling brook. Happy years, happy days. Southern plantation life.

And there is usually a stream of company at Bellevue or Waverley. Friends and relatives from Botetourt or Montgomery, from Amherst or Nelson. There are Rayfields and Lesters, Maceys, Bumpsteds, Coleburns, Twitchells, a dozen or more families sending representatives from estate to estate for visiting and the perpetuation of ties and friendship.

Miss is in the pantry in profound conference with Aunt Christian over dinner-to-be. Aunt Christian throws the weight of her opinion on roast turkey, while Miss thinks ham and duck more suitable. Uncle Hannibal is called on to arbitrate between the two powers. He decides for turkey. Miss is defeated. She accepts her rout with grace. "But I shall insist on chestnut stuffing," she declares as a gesture, merely, of her authority. "Yassam, breadcrumbs an' giblets, Miss!"

Maria enters the sacred precincts. She has a message to deliver.

"Miss, Marse Jeems's in de liberry. He say will yu kindly step in dar er minute?"

Brushing the flour from her black apron, Miss repairs to the library. Uncle Jemmy is seated at the desk. Mr. Menckel stands hard by. And a young man from the village, named Hooper, rises from his chair as Miss enters.

"My dear," says Uncle Jemmy, "come here. I have just made my will. These gentlemen are about to witness it for me. I want you to read it before the signatures are attached. It is important for you to know of its tenor, but I request that you keep the matter as a profound secret from everybody. Mr. Menckel and Mr. Hooper are sworn to do likewise." Uncle Jemmy clears his throat. He hands a sheet of legal paper to his niece.

"In the name of God. Amen." Charlotte reads the will, Uncle Jemmy's will. He owns the remnant of the once large Steppleton fortune. It is nearly gone now, except some bonds and other investments. His brother's financial indiscretions have eaten away the large estate that the two brothers inherited. The will is made out wholly in Charlotte's favour; in the event of her decease in that of her children.

"Thank you, gentlemen, thank you," says Uncle Jemmy. "Good-day, Mr. Hooper, good-day, sir. Mr. Menckel, let me not detain you further."

Uncle Jemmy sticks the quills in the glass of shot, shakes the sand-box over the paper, and blows out the candle at which he has heated his sealing-wax. The two witnesses take their leave.

"Sit down, my love, sit down. I have one or two things to say to you. Sit here on this ottoman by my side." Uncle Jemmy reaches out to pat Charlotte's hand.

"Dear Uncle Jemmy, you are very generous and kind. But is it necessary to have such formalities over the will? Is the will really necessary at all? I dislike to speak of such things as useless forebodings of bereavement (which God delay for years, dear), but am I not the sole Steppleton heir, anyway?"

"Listen, child," says James Steppleton. "Your father was a kind and upright man. But his generosity and loyal friendships led the family into much trouble. It was no more possible for him to refuse to go security for his friends than it was for him to provide for and love his family. It was a praiseworthy weakness in his character."

Charlotte looks into her uncle's eyes with affection and respect. Uncle Jemmy takes one of the quills from the penholder. He holds it in his fingers toying with it. There is a moment's silence between the uncle and niece.

Then he goes on. "Naturally, at my death, my property would descend to you. But I have made this will in order to secure it to you and your children beyond doubt. I do not know if you are aware of the fact or not, but your husband has lately gone on Tony Lester's note. It is not the first time that he has gone security for several of his friends. It is a long time before the first of the bonds falls due. Let us hope that the principals in each case will be able to meet their obligations, but in case they shouldn't . . . Your husband must not be able to touch a cent of what is yours. That is the reason why I have drawn my will in the terms I have. Now, I ask you to keep faith with me in this matter. No matter what happens, the Steppleton fortune must stand as a bulwark between you and poverty. It must be your protection and that of your little children. No impulse of yours, no everweening generosity must deprive you of this safeguard. Now, do you understand me?"

"But surely, Uncle . . . this?"

"We hope for and expect the best for everything. My darling, you really do not need me to warn you of Robert's happy, noble carelessness. I fear he is not the most responsible person in the world. You must be prepared for many surprises and perhaps great sorrows, dear."

Charlotte goes out from this interview in a very sober frame of mind. All day, while she is about her housekeeping, she is preoccupied with all that Uncle Jemmy has told her. Why has Robert not confided in her? Why will he do such reckless things? Can she—and protect her secret with Uncle Jemmy—speak to him about his affairs? As his wife she ought to know. She is full of fretting worries, misgivings.

"Miss, dey's er ole black man at de do' wanter see you." It is Maria again.

Miss goes to the back porch. Seated on the step is an ancient negro man. His wool is white as snow. His back is bent into a bow.

"Howdy, Miss, howdy. Don' yu 'member me, Miss? I'se old Nero. I done druve yu an' yo' Ma in Marse Rayfield's car'age many an' many er time."

"Why, Nero, Uncle Nero!" exclaims Miss. "Certainly I remember you. How do you come here?"

"Ah done walked all de way from Botetourt County, Miss, all de way from Pine Grove. I bin settin' in mer cabin dese many yars, an' Ah says ter maself, Ah says, 'Negro, nigger, yo' li'l' Mistess Dela live er long way off from hyar. She don' come ter Pine Grove no mo' sence her Pa and Ma done died. She got her home and her chillun ter look arter. Nero, yu go see yo' li'l' Mistess fo' de Lord call yu home.' So, Miss, Ah done walk all dis way ter fin' ma mistess. But I'se tuckered out, Miss' Ah cyarn't walk no further terday. I axes yu, Miss, kin Ah res' here wid yo' folks an' go on termorrow?"

"Gracious me, Uncle Nero, that you can. I am delighted to see you." Miss calls for Hannibal. She summons Lewis. She sends for Aunt Christian. Faithful old Nero! He is led to the kitchen for rest and food but he is too weary to eat, too played-out to do more than sink down in the doorway exhausted.

"Dat ole man gwine die," says Uncle Hannibal. "He done walk hisself ter death. 'Tain' nuthin' kin rally him."

It is true. Uncle Nero lapses into a coma, only fitfully awake. Miss orders Lewis to take the carriage and drive directly to Bellevue. He must tell Miss Delz her old coachman has come, and fetch her to see him before he gives out.

In a short time Mrs. Lester, with two of her children, arrives in the Tirwell carriage. She is led to the cot where old Nero lies. He is unconscious or asleep, exhausted, near the end.

"Uncle Nero, Uncle Nero, rouse up. Here's your Miss Dela come to see you."

"Is zat ma Mistess, ma Miss Dela?" The old man wakes up. "Ah done come er long way, Miss Dela, ter see yu fo' Ah die." He holds out a feeble wavering hand.

"Uncle Nero, dear, faithful old friend! Here I am. I have brought two of my children to see you. As soon as you are stronger, I will have you brought to my home and make you very comfortable there." Dela leans over the cot to clasp her faithful old servant's hand. Tears gush from her eyes.

The little girls weep to see their Ma so affected, and Miss turns away to hide her own starting tears. The old man lapses into unconsciousness again at once. His eyelids flutter and close. Dela stands beside the bed. She motions to Charlotte, who, taking the little girls by the hand, leads them into the great house to the company of her own children.

In half an hour Mrs. Lester herself comes into the house. Her cheeks are marked with weeping. The old servitor is dead. She is deeply touched that he should have spent his last strength in an arduous journey afoot just to see her. The attachment between the white people and their faithful black people is sometimes very deep and tender. With Uncle Nero passes a type of the old-time negro, gentle, faithful, loyal.

CHAPTER XXI

A TEACHER for Italian and singing for the Tirwell children. She is Miss Brownall, daughter of an American officer and an Italian lady. She has lived all her life in Naples with the exception of three or four years spent in Boston with her invalid father after her mother's death. Now, the father is dead, too, and Miss Brownall must earn her own bread. She comes to Waverley with the highest letters of recommendation.

Miss Brownall, so fine, so fashionable! She has a silk-velvet cloak. None of the ladies of Belair and vicinity can afford such garments. And she is so beautiful, tall, graceful, poised, with an air of distinguished ease. Uncle Jemmy and Miss go together to the tavern to meet the stage that brings Miss Brownall.

"Gad, Lotty," exclaims Uncle Jemmy, "if Bob had half suspected this beauty, he would have come to the tavern himself to meet her. It is well I am a confirmed old bachelor."

Miss laughs. "The swains of Belair are as good as dead men!"

The children are enraptured with the new preceptress. Mr. Menckel is at once in love with her. Tirwell rubs his hands together and pronounces: "Now, we are in

the real world. No belle in Philadelphia possesses nearly such charm or so many accomplishments."

When Miss Brownall walks abroad in the silk-velvet cloak, there is a face at every window on the street and languishing looks follow her wherever she goes. She smiles on everybody. Such a very charming lady. Yet she is not haughty. She declares herself delighted with Virginia, and Waverley in particular.

In the evenings there is music. Mr. Menckel plays accompaniments for Miss Brownall to sing. Italian opera, French lilts, German ballads. Her voice is fine and rich. In the soft candlelight, standing near the vast shining black pianoforte, Miss Brownall in her lovely clothes is entrancing. There is company in the Waverley drawing-room every evening. The presentable young men from far and near swarm to bask in the beauty and grace of Miss Brownall.

Sometimes, after the family has retired, Mr. Menckel steals out-of-doors to conceal himself in the mock-orange bushes under Miss Brownall's window. He has his flute. In the darkness he serenades the object of his passion. And Miss Brownall sometimes opens her shutters just a peep to throw out of the window a few cape-jasmines or rose-buds. These Mr. Menckel treasures, faded and brown, in a battered strong-box in his top bureau drawer.

Bachelor Bassett, son of the Captain, is infatuated with Miss Brownall like all the other males. But he is too clumsy and bashful to pursue his suit. But wait until Fourth-of-July tournament. Bassett can outride any man in the county, though he does not like to be told of the time his father tried to vault the Steppleton high gate and lost a valuable horse in the attempt.

The Fourth of July ! What a gathering of people from far and near ! What a celebration ! What a barbecue ! Soldiers on parade with antique muskets and flintlocks,

banners and pennons, bugles and drums, school children in procession, bevies of fair ladies in carriages. The Fourth of July, next to Christmas, is the day in the year.

It is the day. It arrives at last. Blue skies, blazing sunshine, banks of opalescent cumulus clouds. The celebration is in the West Woods, a wide-open space redolent with odour of pine and honeysuckle brewed in midsummer air. In the midst a stage draped with patriotic bunting, farther down in the woods the ox-pit for the barbecue of a beef, and at the edge of the trees the yardarms holding the dangling tournament rings.

Early in the morning the wagons and vehicles from afar begin to gather. Horsemen approach. Cattle for trading and exhibition are driven into pens and corrals. Little groups of chatting people form under the trees. Experienced hands begin the roasting of the cow or ox over the slow fires in the pit. From the village come people afoot and in carriages, gentlemen on ponies and horses, nags. It is the Fourth of July.

About nine o'clock, or maybe half-past nine, the procession musters before the court-house. Led by a fife and drum corps, the local volunteer militia, the Masonic Lodge, and the school children of the village, march through the town. They move slowly in the blistering sun the mile or more to the picnic woods. An hilarious rabble runs alongside, waving caps and handkerchiefs, shouting, hallooing, calling to one another The sweaty fists of the children grasp nosegays of wilting flowers. At the end of the marchers follows a train of carriages with the ladies of the celebration committee. It is all extremely patriotic.

Madame Menricus considers that she is in direct charge of the cohorts of school children, but she feels disqualified for a place in the ranks. So she tramps alongside, now and then issuing supplementary orders

to some obstreperous youngster. Madame Menricus's heavy boots make deep prints in the dust, her flopping skirts create a miniature whirlwind.

Miss Flavia Menricus also accompanies the procession, but she does not tramp. She rides. Her nag is high and bony, and her own bony body, voluminously garbed in a hot red riding-habit, might easily be an addition to the skeleton of the horse, draped for propriety's sake. Miss Flavia rides on the other flanks of the procession from that upon which her mother walks. She rides like a general, upright, stony, commanding.

At last all contingents of the celebration arrive at the proper destination in the West Woods. The people draw near to the platform. No Fourth of July could be complete or even celebrated without the ritual speeches. Duty first, pleasure afterwards.

Captain Bassett thunders with more vehemence than coherency. Uncle Jemmy voices some classic sentiments. The school children sing a plaintive and not always tuneful tribute to the glory of the nation, scattering their flowers at the steps of the rostrum. Then the volunteers fire a salute, stack their arms, and rest. It is time for the speech of the day.

Mr. Robert Tirwell steps forward. His long coat is slightly green in the bright light. In his hand he grasps a high hat. And he speaks. Emotion and ambition give eloquence to his words. His language flows easily in rotund perfection. He recounts the glories of freedom, the miracle of democracy, the pride of national honour. He extols the Old Dominion, her sons and her beauteous daughters. Whereat there are cheers, and the ladies clap their hands. Madame Menricus says, " Humph ! " and is scowled at by Miss Flavia.

Robert surpasses himself. He is greatly moved by his own oratorical periods. He is lifted out of himself, especially when he sees the shining eyes of his wife, and

the rapturous looks of Miss Brownall, fixed upon his face. He approaches the very edge of the platform to voice the climax of his argument. "Protection of liberty and peace."

"Mr. Tirwell, sir, we are proud of you, sir!" exclaims Captain Bassett, grasping Robert's hand. "You should be sent to Congress, sir. You are a great orator."

Tirwell flushes with pleasure. Charlotte drops him a curtsey. Miss Brownall presses her bouquet into the hands of little Belle to carry up the stage to her father. Mr. Tony Lester, as prearranged between himself and Robert, raises his hand for silence while he proposes an informal gathering of all the men interested in the formation of a society dedicated to the protection of liberty and peace. Somehow the impression is abroad that both those desirable things are in acute danger, though from whence and by whom no one could quite say.

However, a society is necessary for the especial safeguarding of liberty and peace. All agree on that. Nothing like being forearmed for emergency. That day in Belair the society is actually inaugurated. But not before the feast. The barbecue is ready, the long tables set forth with abundance of fare. The formal speechmaking is over.

Mr. Tirwell sits at the head of one of the long tables. He carves a roast pig with an apple in its mouth. Negro men and boys hasten to and fro serving portion of tough meat from the barbecued ox. There are many tubs of lukewarm lemonade, much sought after by the children. The men resort to demijohn and flask, cider, whisky, applejack.

Mr. Menckel remarks *sotto voce* to Madame Menricus that he really thinks he ought to resign as tutor to the Tirwell children since Mr. Tirwell, in his speech, laid such emphasis on the menace of the foreigner to Virginian

society. Madame Menricus cracks a chicken bone and utters the one word "Filibuster!" Miss Flavia lifts her voice in a not too modest laugh.

"I trust you are enjoying yourself, Madame Menricus and Miss Menricus?" inquires Mrs. Bassett. "As I was saying to Mrs. Lester just now, this is a very happy occasion and we ought to be very proud of the superior ability of our local orators."

"I am very hot," says Madame Menricus. "I shall be glad when the celebration is over and permits me to relax my oversight of the children under my care."

Dinner is over. The people scatter far and wide through the woods. The carriages are full of babies and little children fast asleep. Matrons superintend the clearing up of the tables. Men gather in knots discussing politics, crops, prices of tobacco and wheat and corn. Some sleep on the hot ground in the shadow of the trees; some do horse-trading. Youths and maidens saunter away together, far off where curious eyes may not see their love-making.

Miss Flavia Menricus catches up her heavy red riding-habit on a hook. Her stringy hair is wet with perspiration. It falls down in dank strands below the brim of her bonnet. She strides about amongst the farmers' wives seeking their daughters as boarders for the Belair Academy. Madame Menricus is stretched upon the ground, her head covered by a newspaper, sleeping soundly, snoring like a man.

Miss forms the centre of a little gathering of family and friends—Lesters, Bassetts. She has a guitar and is singing songs. The pastime is delightful to Mr. Menckel, who always enjoys music. He sings some German songs, and Miss Brownall favours with Italian airs. Tirwell himself is off, busy about the organisation of the society. Bachelor Bassett sits a little apart, adoring in his heavy, ram-like fashion the graceful Miss Brownall. He is

jealous of gentle Mr. Menckel. With songs Mr. Menckel is his superior. He is in a fret waiting for the tournament to begin.

Over the tops of the trees the air quivers with the heat of the July sun ; far off, over the hazy ridge of the mountains, black thunder-clouds are piling up against the sky. From the stream at the bottom of the woods can be heard the delighted cries of countless children paddling in the water, playing. And the black people from their retired place some distance off are talking and laughing at their dinner.

Three o'clock ; time for the tournament. Over twenty riders. The bugle blows, the drums roll. The spectators gather along the course. The fife and drum corps stand at one end of the run and the judges at the other. Mr. Tony Lester is the starter. His face is very red from drink and food. He holds in his fingers a gigantic white silk handkerchief with which to give the signal to each horseman. Bevies of young ladies watch the riding breathlessly. One of them will be queen.

All the county is gathered in the West Woods. Politics; cattle-trading ; gossip ; love-making. By all odds Miss Brownall is the most sought-after young lady. Gentlemen flock around her. They are all deeply jealous of each other for her favour. The sharpest rivalry is between Mr. Bassett and Mr. Leonard Hooper. Each of them expects to be champion of the tournament. Mr. Bassett has a fine thoroughbred mare ; Mr. Hooper also possesses a spirited steed. In any event Miss Brownall will be queen.

During the tournament Miss Brownall smiles and smiles and clasps her lovely hands as each rider thunders down the course. The knights wear coloured sashes and streamers on their hats. When the bugle blows and the white handkerchief drops, the rider levels his spear and tears madly along the run. There is great shouting and

applause as he finishes his essay for the capture of the rings. The spectators hold their breath until the run is over.

Bassett and Hooper contending together for the prize, not the rings but the favour of Miss Brownall. And Bassett wins. But he is too shy and bashful to approach the person of Miss Brownall. He sends Mr. Lester as his ambassador. Will Miss Brownall do Mr. Bassett the honour to be queen of the ball? Miss Brownall is full of blushes.

"Lawk, must I lead the ball with that gander?" she whispers to Mrs. Tirwell. But rather than forego the honour of being queen, she accepts the invitation and sends the gentleman her scarf, which he fastens to his spear, riding hither and thither with much bluster and pride.

The picnic is over with the end of the tournament. People begin preparations for departure. The roads stream with wagons and beasts homeward bound. Many of the men are more than tipsy. Their womenfolk find it hard to persuade them to leave the village.

At Waverley there is much company, many young people staying overnight to attend the ball. Mr. Bassett himself is there. He sits on the front porch drinking mint-juleps, but Mr. Hooper, who has accompanied the ladies home, is strolling about the grounds with Miss Brownall. Mrs. Tirwell from her chamber window sees the pair on the lawn. She guesses at the ardent addresses Mr. Hooper is directing to Miss Brownall.

Who will win in the long run the hand of the lady, the dashing and good-looking Leonard Hooper or the substantial and clumsy Bassett? But Charlotte has not time to muse. Judith is here inquiring as to the dresses of Belle and Lotty, their sashes, their pantalets. Maria is waiting the decision before arraying the two elder children to present themselves amongst the company

downstairs. White dresses, lawn pantalets, and a blue sash for Belle, a pink one for Lotty; a clean handkerchief each. And Charlotte must dress herself and hurry down to confer with Uncle Hannibal about the setting of the supper-table. Though she is still so young a woman, Mrs. Tirwell dresses soberly. Since Mrs. Steppleton's death, she wears a cap, and a heavy gold watch is pinned on her bosom. Uncle Harvey is donor of the watch, years ago soon after the birth of Belle. It has a long heavy golden chain to drape across the person.

Mrs. Tirwell proceeds about her toilet. Shall she wear the watch or some of the set of hair jewellery Ma gave her? It is not a momentous question. She selects the brooch and the earrings. The watch will do, too. As she pins her cap before the mirror, Charlotte notices one or two gray hairs on her brow. She separates them carefully from the rest and snips them off. Gray hairs! Years! And there is Miss Brownall in the box-walk with a lover! Time passes, and who may stay it?

Miss descends the staircase. The hall and the porch are full of company. Two youthful assistants to Uncle Hannibal are collecting the julep glasses to return to the pantry. Charlotte sees her husband standing at the edge of the front-porch steps. He is gesticulating and calling to some one. A carriage is coming round the circle.

It is the carry-all of Uncle Harvey Twitchell, the same old barouche, though rather sagging on its springs now. Inside, fanning herself with a turkey wing, is Aunt Martha. Her offspring surround her. But one or two have left the barouche. Not enough room. Young Harvey, a freckled lad of fifteen or so, rides a horse of his own. Behind Uncle Harvey, Edward is clinging.

Mr. Tirwell greets the new arrivals cordially. Mrs. Tirwell runs out beside him. She kisses Uncle Harvey. She kisses Aunt Martha. And she kisses each one of the children. Dear, dear friends and kin.

"Sweet and lovely as a full-blown rose," declares Uncle Harvey, embracing his niece. "Are you glad to see your old travelling uncle and his family wares? Fourth of July! We tried to arrive yesterday, but the Langleys insisted on our remaining another night at Wynch's Ferry. They had some fireworks. A great treat for the children. But we hurried on this morning. One of the horses cast a shoe; otherwise we should have been here in time to go to the West Woods for the remnant of the barbecue at any rate."

Come in! Come in! Judith! Prissy! Maria! Lewis! Get hot water for Mrs. Twitchell and the girls to bathe the dust of the road off. Bring Mr. Twitchell a julep directly. Will Young Harvey be permitted a julep? No; just a sip from the glass of his father. Dispose of these new arrivals, the males in the room over the library, the females in the room over the dining-room. To-morrow the house will be less crowded. Another disposition can be made then, more comfortable to-morrow. But hurry and get ready for supper. Hannibal is about to throw open the dining-room door. And of course Mr. and Mrs. Twitchell and the elder children will go to the Fourth-of-July ball. Miss Brownall is going to be queen.

After supper such dressing for the ball! The ladies chatter the while. They occupy three large adjoining rooms. There are so many questions of ribbons and ornaments, colours, flounces, laces, bows. The gentlemen have less to do. They assemble downstairs in the library, on the porches, in the hall. The ladies will come down later. The children, prim and fresh and starched, sit in stiff attitudes on straight chairs, guarded by Judith. She will not permit them to play or move around, for fear of mussing their clothes. Maria circulates amongst them with a brush and comb putting last and unnecessary touches on the curls of the girls and the

stiff mops of the boys. Soon they will be home again. Children are permitted to watch the ball until the crowning of the queen ; then they must retire.

The company walks across the lawn, down the lane the short distance to the street, thence to the new town hall, where the ball is held. Only Miss Brownall, because she is queen, rides in a carriage with Mrs. Tirwell and Mrs. Twitchell. Miss Brownall wears a lovely white muslin dress. It has a long train contrived at the last minute by the ingenuity of Judith and Miss. They can make anything of nothing. They fasten stuff to Miss Brownall's dress so that she will have a train. And she wears lace on her head, beautiful old lace that had been once some bride's veil. On her hands are real kid gloves, and she has a white silk fan. She is very beautiful. Bachelor Bassett worships from a safe distance, but Hooper boldly pays her compliments.

The town hall is new. The whitewash is still wet enough to give off a dank odour. But the flags and the flowers make the bare place festive. The world and his wife are there. The carriages roll up to the steps discharging lovely young ladies and dignified matrons. The whole eligible population of Belair and the county attends the ball. It is not yet quite dark. Summer night. Nor is it still light. The early stars glitter in a hot green sky.

On a stage is a throne, covered with white and wreathed about with flowers. There is a white footstool. And chairs for the maids-of-honour, two of them. Their knights will stand behind the chairs. People move about the hall, chatting, laughing. In a vast basement supper is preparing. In the galleries are flocks of children come to see the crowning of the queen and the grand march.

Mr. James Steppleton is master-of-ceremonies for the coronation. He mounts the stage. In his fingers is a paper. It is his "remarks." He claps his hands for

silence. He reads out the honour list of the games and the tournament. He bestows the rewards and prizes. Then he summons the champion upon the stage. Bassett's boots squeak loudly as he comes up the hall. His countenance is brick-red. He would like to sink into the ground. What should be heaven is hell to him. Mr. Steppleton demands of him to name his queen, and so he does to the delight if not surprise of all assembled. The master-of-ceremonies gives a sign to the musicians.

As the music starts, pages throw open the doors to the anteroom, and the queen, accompanied by her maids-of-honour and their knights, leaning on the arm of Mr. Tirwell, proceeds to the stage. Little Lotty Tirwell walks first. In a white basket she carries the crown of roses for the queen. Everybody leans forward to see the procession, to remark on the loveliness of the queen. She is blushing. She is looking down. Hooper gives her a glance fraught with love and meaning as she passes by.

Mr. James Steppleton receives the queen. He hands her to her throne. Then he takes the wreath of flowers from the basket. He gives it to the agonising champion, who places it on the head of Miss Brownall. Everybody claps. The music swells. The spectators in the galleries sigh aloud with happy satisfaction.

Now the grand march to open the ball. The champion and his queen lead off, the attendants of the court follow, and the dancers fall in behind. Around the hall they go, once, twice, three times. Then the quadrille. What a splendid ball!

Miss climbs the gallery stairs to see the children safely off for home. Judith is with them. They embrace Miss lovingly one by one. Other people's children are departing too. Miss looks down on the progress of the dance. How lovely it is, everybody so happy, so care-free, so gay! There is Tony Lester, stout as he is, dancing

gaily with one of the Misses Hooper. Dela is with Uncle Jemmy. They are chatting near the stage. Dela is not dancing. She again expects to be a mother.

Where is Mr. Tirwell? There he is twirling the queen about in the dance, passing her on down the line, receiving the hand of another damsel, and another. Poor Bassett is perspiring badly. The exigencies of the dance take heavy toll from him. The queen, holding out her hand to him, returns to her place at the head of the line. Bassett steps out to meet her, but too far. He treads on her train. Horrors! The train leaves its moorings with a loud snarl of protesting threads and pins. The quadrille breaks up in confusion. The ladies surround the unfortunate lady. They bear her off to the anteroom. The gentlemen guffaw mercilessly at poor clumsy Bassett. Miss hurries down to lend her aid in the reparation of the train.

"Well, did you enjoy the ball, my dear?" asked Tirwell of his wife, when they have retired for the night. "Lovely women, but I would match my wife against them all."

"Yes, sir, a very successful entertainment," says Charlotte, unfastening the ear-rings.

"Poor Bassett took himself home after his graceless accident." Tirwell places his cravat on the bureau. He gazes at his dim reflection in the glass, pulling at his sideburns thoughtfully. "He means the best in the world, but he ought never to subject himself to the ordeal of society. What do you think of his prospects with Miss Brownall?" Robert turns half-way round to scrutinise his wife's face.

"I am sure I do not know, but I doubt if she has the perception to fix on an honest man. Not that Mr. Hooper isn't, but he certainly is not so dependable as Mr. Bassett."

"By the way," says Tirwell, preparing to get into bed,

"just to change the subject, there is a more serious matter to talk to you about." Robert pulls out the little set of steps from under the bedstead. By them he mounts to the top of the high mound of the feather bed. "Aren't you ready to get into bed?"

"In a moment. Go on, tell me what you have on your mind. I'm listening." Charlotte is behind the screen laving her face. The July night is close and sultry, late as the hour is.

"Well, I must go away for a while. I must take a business trip to Philadelphia."

"Oh, the society, is it not?"

"No, not that, though doubtless I shall attend to some business in that line while I am away. No; I must go to see my old guardian. It is necessary for me to raise some money right away. I think he will be able to help me."

"Well, sir, I trust that we shall not be separated for long?"

"I can't tell just now. I must have some money at once because Tony Lester's bond is due. He cannot meet it himself."

Charlotte feels a cold wave of apprehension pass all through her body. She snuffs out the candle and climbs into bed. Robert reaches out his arm to draw her close to himself.

"Of course you knew I had gone security for Lester, didn't you? I am sure I must have told you at the time."

"Yes, sir, I was aware of the matter, but not until later. You did not tell me. Uncle Jemmy told me."

"The deuce he did!" exclaims Tirwell. "The deuce he did! I told you myself. I remember it distinctly now. I said: 'My love, I must go security for Lester . . . a mere formality . . . just my signature.' Now, didn't I?"

"Is the note now due?" asks Charlotte. "How much is it?"

"Oh, a nominal sum, but cash is hard to raise. I cannot fail in a point of honour. Now, can I?"

"Oh, no, of course not. But how much is it?"

"Seventy thousand dollars!"

"Seventy thousand dollars!"

CHAPTER XXII

SEVENTY thousand dollars! Robert Tirwell's bond for Tony Lester!

The words ring in Charlotte's head like a refrain, on and on.

In a few days Tirwell leaves home. He packs his portmanteau. He will go alone by stage. No body-servant. Impossible to say how long he may be away.

"Dearest, I'm leaving." Tirwell draws his wife into the library and closes the door. "God bless and keep you and the children safe. Kiss me!"

"And God bless you. Hasten home. I shall count the days."

Judith knocking at the door. Ah, yes, the clean handkerchiefs. Charlotte hastens to slip them into the corner of the portmanteau. Lewis waits to carry it to the Beech and Brook Tavern, where the stage halts. Strapped! Lewis goes. The children cling to their father's hand to say farewell. Mr. Menckel and Miss Brownall also are on hand. Good-bye!

Miss returns to the library. She wishes to be alone. She locks the door. She kneels down. "Lord God, have mercy. Keep us all under the shadow of thy wing!" Her hand slips out across the top of the desk. It touches an open book, the book Robert has been reading.

Waverley! Miss rises to her feet. She picks up the book. Ah, this note is the bookmark evidently. It shall continue to mark the place where dear Robert left off reading. Charlotte spreads out the sheet to fold it neatly. The signature at the bottom catches her eyes. "Rose." What is this? Charlotte glances at the line or two of script in Miss Brownall's handwriting. "I thank you for the gloves. Good-bye, beloved friend. Nobody must know of our love. Rose."

Rose Brownall! Ah, God!

Miss closes the book and finds the empty place for it on the shelves. She slips the note into her bosom. She unlocks the library door. Each movement is made with the most careful deliberation. She must not give way. She will not. But her heart is like lead and the walls of the house oppress her. Out-of-doors, to the box-walk. Up and down, her skirts brushing the aromatic shrubs. Action and thought. Between her teeth she bites hard on the hem of her handkerchief.

Tirwell and the governess! Under the very roof of Waverley! Ah, God! How hard some things are to bear!

After an hour of pacing to and fro in the box-walk, Miss is quieter. She sees Uncle Jemmy coming toward the house from the direction of the stables. She goes to meet him. Near the kitchen young Godfrey, Judith's son, is helping the carpenter erect a trellis for the trumpet vines. He looks almost white contrasted with the elderly coal-black negro man. From the kitchen comes a fragrant odour of coffee roasting and the humming sound of Aunt Christian singing hymns at her work.

"Come, precious, walk with me about the lawn," says Uncle Jemmy. "Do not sorrow. Robert will be home again in a few weeks' time."

Charlotte takes his arm. He raises her hand to his lips. Dear uncle! But Charlotte cannot tell the heavy

secret at her heart. Some trials must be borne alone. She will bear this one. Love for Uncle Jemmy swells in her heart. She is near to tears. The old gentleman sees the deep trouble in the uplifted eyes. He kisses her hand again. Together they saunter about the grounds under the fine, spreading oaks. Uncle Jemmy speaks of a thousand and one irrelevant matters to distract her mind. Soon she is quieter and can talk. Once she even smiles.

In the summer evenings the household at Waverley sits on the front porch. As the moon rises the mocking-birds begin to sing in the mock-orange and the syringa bushes. The Tirwell children and the Twitchell children romp and play in the circle and drive. Judith will not permit them to run on the lawns because of the night dew that would wet their feet and soil pantalets and dresses.

If conversation languishes, Mr. Menckel will rise and repair to the parlour. The strains of his music are delicate and lovely coming through the open door and the windows. Uncle Harvey prefers to talk, as does his spouse. They travel so extensively, meeting so many people, hearing so much news, that they are never done retailing all they have to tell. Miss is very reserved and quiet since the departure of her husband. She is not sad, but there is a strange new dignity and strength about her bearing. All note it.

Tirwell has been gone three weeks. Still no word from him. Surely by now he has been in Philadelphia more than a week? Why does he not write? Charlotte asks herself these questions over and over again.

"You are sad, dear Mistress Tirwell," says Mr. Menckel. "Shall I play for you? Perhaps Miss Brownall will sing for us?"

Miss Brownall rises and follows Mr. Menckel into the parlour. Soon the night is vibrant with music. A full

moon rides over the trees The children race up the drive to announce a visitor. Mr. Hooper is turning in at the gate. He has come for Miss Brownall to go to the Academy, where Miss Flavia Menricus is entertaining a few friends.

Young Harvey Twitchell runs into the parlour to call Miss Brownall. Had she forgotten the appointment? But, no, she is coming out now with a light shawl on her arm. She is ready to go. Good-night, but she will be home early. When she is gone, Mr. Menckel leaves his piano.

"Will you not play for us, Mistress Tirwell?" he says. "Let me bring the harp out here on the porch."

"Divine! Yes, do, my love," says Aunt Martha.

So the harp is brought outside, and Charlotte tilts it against her shoulder, tapping the pedals with one small foot, and her hands stray out to seek a melody. She plays. Ballads. "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon." "My love is like a red, red rose." "Auld Robin Gray."

"Play 'Oh, wert thou in the cauld blast,'" begs Uncle Harvey.

Charlotte plays it, and Uncle Harvey and Aunt Martha sing the words. Then, "John Anderson, my jo, John."

Ah, here are Hannibal and Judith, Hannibal with the nest of tables for the light nine o'clock supper, and Judith with purpose in her eyes to call the children to bed. But they are hiding behind the box-walk. Young Harvey is sent to command them to come in directly. Bed-time. About the circle of elders they go to kiss each one good-night! Mr. Menckel too. Young Harvey and Margaret may remain up a little while longer. They are older. They may have some supper.

Uncle Harvey is talking with Mr. Menckel about the new invention, steam-cars, the railroad. The line called

Baltimore and Ohio has been in operation some years, very successfully, too. The iron roads are being constructed in other parts of the country. There is one from Richmond to Fredericksburg. Uncle Harvey has ridden on it, also Margaret.

"Margaret was ill," announces Young Harvey.

"I was not so, now," expostulates Margaret. "At least it was not riding in the cars. I had indigestion anyway."

"Anyway, my dear, I had to cup you when you reached Richmond," says the lassie's Ma. She would like to support both her children, defend both.

"However, you may expect a road through Belair before many years," says Uncle Harvey. "I have heard talk of a company forming to construct one across the mountains beyond here, and on to the coal deposits in the western part of the State."

"Oh, pray," exclaims Miss, "I do trust no such catastrophe will befall us here. A railroad! We could not hear ourselves think!"

"Just so, my dear," continues Uncle Harvey, "exactly. But it will come nevertheless." And Uncle Harvey jumps out of his chair and begins to imitate the sounds of the steam-engine, the rumble of the cars. It is appalling. Why should human beings want to destroy the green earth and the still air by introducing such monstrosities into the world? A railroad!

"This generation may not like to have their old-fashioned peace disturbed, but the new generation will adapt themselves gladly to the railroad," continues Uncle Harvey.

"Yes, because it will enrich people in an entirely new way," comments James Steppleton, nodding his head. "However, for my part, I trust I may never live to see such a thing. God meant man to live on the land.

When he deserts that, he flies toward his own certain destruction."

"In April we were staying at the plantation of a Judge Burruss in Henrico County," says Uncle Harvey. "The Richmond and Fredericksburg line runs right at the edge of his lands. The old gentleman hates it. Once every month he walks the three miles to the tracks to spit on the thing he detests."

"But, my dear, you must admit that Judge Burruss was half mad," interposes Mrs. Twitchell. "He keeps his ears stuffed tight with cotton so as not to hear the hooting of the engine whistles from afar. Once he thrashed his little grandson severely for imitating the noises of a steam engine. The child partly deserved it, for he did so expressly to annoy the old gentleman."

Uncle Hannibal comes to remove the remains of the handed supper, stack together the tea-tables, and close the shutters of the parlour windows. The old negro moves slowly, with great dignity. He is bent with age, but will never permit one of his assistant to perform the late-supper ritual, or the ceremony of closing the house for the night. These duties are his special and sacred prerogatives.

"Half-past ten," remarks Uncle Jemmy, consulting his immense gold timepiece. "Time for me to go to bed. Good-night, good-night."

But no one lingers. Aunt Harvey is visibly yawning. Young Harvey is asleep with his head against one of the pillars of the porch, and Margaret is, too, sitting on a cushion at the feet of her cousin Charlotte Tirwell, her head in her lap. Good-night, good-night. The circle breaks up.

The mistress of Waverley retires to the chamber. It is very warm. She throws open the blinds and blows out her candle. Then she sits down beside the window in the flood of the moonlight, looking out across the lawns,

musing, praying. August the first. She is two weeks overdue her time. Yes, surely, there is another life within her. Ah, God, ah, God! may this be a son! For a son Robert will cease philandering, cease reckless spending, mad plans and madder schemes for fame and fortune. If this may only be a son! Ah, God, ah, God!

There is a gentle rap on the door.

"Come in," says Miss. "Is it you, Judith?"

"No, it is I." Miss Brownall. "I saw you sitting here as I crossed the lawn."

"I did not see you," answers Miss. "I must have been dreaming."

"I merely wanted to say——" Miss Brownall hesitates. "I merely thought it well to tell you that I must leave your employ on the first of September. I am going to marry Leonard Hooper."

"If your decision is irrevocably determined," says Miss, rising from her low chair, "I can truthfully say 'God bless you.'"

"Thank you, madam. Good-night."

"Good-night, Miss Brownall."

But Miss Brownall lingers. "I have been very happy here at Waverley, Mrs. Tirwell. I am very fond of your little girls. But you do not express any sentiment of regret at losing your governess. Would it be too bold in me to inquire your reason?"

"It would be bold in me to volunteer an opinion that would without doubt be unpleasant to you to hear," says Miss. She speaks slowly, feeling carefully for her words. "But since you solicit me, I will give you my reasons. I am not sorry to have you leave Waverley, though I should have been genuinely distressed at the loss a month ago. But I do not wish you to remain. That is the truth. If I mention a gift of gloves that you have received, that will be sufficient to make you understand my point of view. Will it not?"

"You are over suspicious, madam. I assure you, so far as I am concerned, you need have no misgivings."

"I deliberately choose to misbelieve you, Miss Brownall."

"Then, good-night, madam. We understand each other, I believe. To-morrow I shall remove to the Academy. Miss Menricus has already besought me to reside with her until the time of my wedding."

Very slowly Miss undresses and gets into bed. The clock in the hall strikes midnight. The sound of a flute from the covert of rosebushes breaks softly on the still, hot air. Mr. Menckel is serenading Rose Brownall. Poor Mr. Menckel! How sad and tragic is human love!

No letter from Tirwell. Silence. Why does he not write? What is he doing? The mistress of Waverley grows more and more anxious. Will he ever return? How can she keep the plantation going without the presence of the master?

The end of the first week in August. Without a word of warning, one scalding afternoon, Tirwell returns. He is in high spirits. He finds his wife in the chamber.

"Dearest, I'm home again, home again! I have counted the days. Everything is settled. My guardian has lent me the money upon the strength of his will. It is most kind and generous of him. See, I have it here, all in gold, in this wallet." Robert, like a boy, turns out a stream of glittering coins in the white expanse of the bed. "Gold!"

Charlotte is too surprised to speak. Tirwell continues.

"I have brought everybody presents, or they will arrive in a week or so. I have the new mahogany wardrobe for the chamber. And I have two Wedgwood spittoons for the parlour . . . very fashionable in Philadelphia . . . white deer and hounds on a deep blue ground. And, what do you think! Silk dresses for

the girls. Won't they be fine! And a real Strad for Menckel. A shawl for Miss Brownall!"

"She has gloves," pronounces Miss, pointedly.

Tirwell throws back his head and laughs aloud. "Gloves! Yes, the gloves Hooper sent me to give her. You must have seen the note she wrote him in reply. He gave it to me to see. The fatuous lover made me his confidant and go-between. I remembered as soon as I had left the house that I had left that note in the novel I was reading. You found it?"

Tirwell grasps his wife's arms, gazing into her startled eyes, enjoying her confusion and her relieved surprise. "What a woman you are!" he exclaims. "Gloves! Gad, you thought you were sly! Ha, ha, ha!"

But Miss is overcome with shame and regret. She bursts into tears. She falls on her knees imploring forgiveness, clasping her dear one's hands. "How shall I ever make amends! I have wronged that poor girl beyond repair. I must put on my bonnet and shawl and go at once to the Academy to implore her forgiveness. Ah, me, how foolish we women can be!"

Self-incriminations, tears, pardons, and the mistress of Waverley secures the forgiveness of Miss Brownall. She insists that the wedding shall take place in the parlour at Waverley, and the supper there too. Mr. Tirwell will give away the bride. A bad botch is made right.

But Charlotte cannot do enough to express her love for her husband. She feels all the happy emotion of her young married life renewed. The lowering storm-coluds have passed so happily away. The sunshine of love and confidence floods her heart. And she tells him her certainty of the coming of a son. No disappointment this time. Both are so happy, husband and wife.

In September, Dela Lester has another daughter. Tirwell jokes at Lester unmercifully. He will have a

son. This time a son. Relationships between Bellevue and Waverley are very friendly again. Lester sees possibilities of paying back the money in a year or two. His prospects are hopeful and improved. Anyway, he intends to mortgage his place. Tirwell shall not suffer for him.

Life settles again on a firm and happy basis. Miss Brownall is married to Leonard Hooper in the Waverley parlour. Bachelor Bassett and Mr. Menckel, rejected aspirants for the favour of the bride, claim a last consolation. A kiss. And the request is granted. It makes them both so sad and so happy.

Wedding in the parlour. But in a community as large as Belair there should be a church. After the ceremony, the whole company discusses this fact. There ought to be a church in Belair. Yes, there ought. The officiating minister himself approves the idea. He suggests the formation of a committee of influential church people to consider and forward the scheme. Immediately the ladies band themselves together to work for the raising of funds for the purpose. Indeed, there should be an Episcopal Church for the community.

Quite a large sum of money is subscribed for the church that very evening. And Tirwell offers a large corner of his land at the end of the lawn near the street as a site for the edifice.

CHAPTER XXIII

Silk dresses for Belle and Lotty, dark blue and dark green. Young ladies, the love and pride of their Pa. Everything is so happy, now that the money question is settled and a son coming. Mr. Tirwell really must show off his girls, the two elder ones. Such well-grown, beautiful children. The lovely Tirwell girls. They will go to Pine Grove for a visit, and to Deer Hall, Bracebridge, and Toppington, estates of friends in Botetourt and Roanoke. Their Pa will take them on a trip to show them off. Two exquisite Virginia girls with brand-new silk dresses.

Taft drives the carriage. Miss waves after it from the top of the front steps, and Maria runs behind out of the gate and far down the lane. "Miss Belle, Miss Lotty, good-bye!"

"Really lovely children, my love," says Aunt Martha to Charlotte, when Miss re-enters the house. "God has been good to you. He has blessed you."

"If I could only have a son . . ."

"I am so glad the children can go to Pine Grove. They ought to make acquaintance with all the circle of your friends before they come of age. My grand-nephews and grand-nieces will be delighted with them. Has it been long since you made a visit to Pine Grove yourself?"

"Yes, years," answers Charlotte. "Really, now I think of it, not since Dela was married. Pine Grove must be greatly altered since those days."

"Not the place, but the family, yes. Aunt Towser has long since passed away, and my dear sister-in-law. My brother has ceased to manage the estate since young

Edward came of age and married. You should see Edward's four fine boys. The eldest, also Edward, is nearly sixteen."

Aunt Harvey prattles on about the Rayfield family, Pine Grove, changes the years have wrought in persons and places. She is a well of genealogical information, too, never done tracing connections. And she knows all the gossip of ten counties. While she talks, she sews, always sewing for her children, endless seams, buttonholes, hems, darns, patches. Miss employs her needle likewise. Ladies are never idle.

Hot September, dry. The trees and all the shrubs are covered with red dust blown in from the roads. The Waverley house is open from end to end, a draught through the T-halls makes the air slightly cooler, and the drawn blinds produce a comfortable darkness. On a stand in the front hall is a silver pitcher. Dewdrops hang all over it. Everybody who passes by stops to drink ice water in one of the silver goblets that stand on the tray with the pitcher.

Outside the creaking of the windlass of the well makes a monotonous sound. Uncle Bob is always drawing water, for the house, for the kitchen, for the servants' quarters, and the trough at the back of the well-house, where the cows and colts come to drink. Creak, creak; these hot days the windlass is never still. So much cool well water. And there is also the sound of a steady plink-plank, plink-plank. Wood-chopping. Wood for the cooking, and wood against the fall and the winter, piles of chopped lengths from the stacked cords behind the smoke-house. A special negro man just for wood-chopping and the fires.

Godfrey appears. He comes to plane a door that will not close properly. Perspiration stands in beads on his brow, and the back of his coarse blue linen shirt is wet.

"Godfrey, why doesn't the head carpenter come

himself ? " asks Miss. " You are not strong enough to take down that heavy door."

" Yassam 'is, Miss," pants the mulatto boy. " Ah's strong."

He is. He lifts the weighty leaf from the hinge-sockets and lays it edgewise against his horse, clamping it steady with his knee. Then his plane runs smoothly, gently along the edge. Long, thin shavings fall to the ground, delicately smooth, delicately cut. His work takes a moment and the door is rehung. It shuts perfectly.

" Dar, dat's done, Miss. Anything else you want done terday, Miss ? " Godfrey draws his sleeve across his wet forehead.

" That boy is certainly a white man's son," declares Aunt Twitchell, when Godfrey is gone. " And how like Maria he is too ! One can scarcely believe such things of Judith. She is so dignified, so truly sensible and refined. Now, if your flighty Prissy had been their mother, I should not have been surprised."

" One cannot blame the poor black people too severely," says Miss.

" No, dear, I am not blaming the black people for loose morals. It is the white man I blame, the white man who demeans himself and his race by misleading the poor negro women. Have you never learned from Judith who the father of those two children is ? "

" Never ! " declares Miss with slightly too strong an emphasis. " I do not wish to know. Whoever he is, I am sure Judith has no relations with him now."

At this moment Judith appears driving a flock of children before her. It is nearly dinner-time. Children need to wash hands and faces before food. The Twitchell children and the Tirwells' little daughter Martha.

" Mercy me ! " exclaims Miss. " Is it that late ? Here are the children. I must put on a fresh cap before

dinner. Here, Martha, come, dear, kiss your Ma, kiss Miss. My dearest little darling ! "

" Miss, have Pa and the girls reached Pine Grove yet ? "

" Gracious, no ! They only just left this morning. They won't get to Pine Grove until supper-time, maybe afterwards."

Maria stands at one end of the dinner-table waving aloft a long brush of peacock feathers to shoo away the flies. Uncle Jemmy carves the ham. Hannibal passes about the table with the numerous vegetables, the hot breads, and a gigantic pitcher of iced tea. Ralph, one of Hannibal's henchmen, scurries back and forth from the house to the kitchen to fetch in the dishes . . . fried chicken, fritters, roasting-ears.

When the meal is about half over, Hannibal holds a colloquy with an unseen person at the pantry door. Then he comes up behind Miss's chair.

"Miss, dat ar nigger Remus done fall offen er ladder in de smoke-house an' broke his laig. He won't 'low nobody tetch 'im ceppen you come say what he mus' do."

" My gracious me ! " Miss jumps up from the table. " Remus has broken his leg ! If you will excuse me, I will go and attend to him directly. Hannibal, send Godfrey for Dr. Spooner immediately. Poor Remus ! "

It takes some time to make Remus comfortable. Miss stays near him until he is laid on the bed in his cabin and the physician has come. She sends him from the big house a bottle of wine, white bread, and a bowl of soup. Remus is really suffering, but every time his mistress appears, his eye clears and he smiles with gratitude and pleasure.

" Marse Robert sho' is gwine be surprise' when he hears his Remus done broke his laig, muses Remus conceitedly.

The negroes are a constant care and worry. They must be clothed. They must be fed. They must be kept busy. Duties are invented to keep them engaged and happy. When they are sick, they must be cared for. A heavy burden, moral and financial. The income of the great plantations is largely consumed by the black people. So many of them, and babies in most cabins every year. Tirwell likens plantation life to a serpent eating his own tail. Everything goes for the support of the black population, their dwellings, livelihood, necessities. And of course something into the land, the stock, and the buildings. Little left for the white people in the way of either luxuries or pleasures. So little ready money.

The mistress is assiduous in her attentions to the aged, infirm, and ill. She visits them constantly, supplying all their wants, comforting them, sympathising. And they love her. They depend so upon her. Black children.

The more intelligent are taught to read and write and cipher. And there is religious instruction. The minister never comes but there is a sermon in the quarters, and the babies baptised, and marriages performed according to the rites of the Church. There are as well on every plantation numerous negro preachers, evangelists, and exhorters. Ignorant certainly, but fervent and sincere. Preachings and revivals are the order of the day when the harvests are in.

After Remus breaks his leg, if Miss cannot be found, she is sure to be in the sufferer's cabin reading to him, consoling him, instructing him in many ways. Remus's wife, Yellow Netty, stands dumbly, admiringly by. "Dat ar Remus sho' is bles' by Gawd," she says.

In a few days letters come to Waverley from the travellers. Tirwell writes of the grace and beauty of his daughters. Everywhere they stop, people admire and praise them. Belle is so modest and gentle ; Lotty is so

vivacious and gay. They wear the silk dresses, and brooches. But alas, the very first night at dinner at Pine Grove, a servant spills a plate of hot soup all over Belle's new silk dress. Catastrophe!

Mr. Rayfield is much aged. His health is far from sound. At this news, Aunt Martha sighs and plies her turkey-wing fan sadly. Edward Rayfield's children are a roistering, healthy lot. The Tirwell girls and the Rayfield youngsters agree together admirably, though Lotty had a fit of weeping when little Elizabeth Rayfield asked her if she were a coloured girl because she refers to her Ma as Miss. This causes much elderly amusement at Pine Grove. Robert misses Mrs. Rayfield and the rubicund Aunt Towser. "Ah, me, oh, my," laments Aunt Martha, "life is so short!"

Belle writes a dutiful note to her Ma, and one to her Uncle Jemmy. She scans a page of Latin every day with Dela Rayfield, and Lotty does sums. The children play school. She is so, so sorry about the soup on the silk dress. There is a blind coloured girl in the quarters. Belle and Dela take turns reading the Bible to her every day. And Pa and Mr. Rayfield (meaning Edward, junior) shoot bull-bats every evening. All they have to do is to take their guns and stand on the lawn. The bull-bats fly about in great numbers.

Lotty is learning to play the guitar. If she can learn before she returns home, Pa promises to buy her one of her own. And she knows several new songs besides old ones like "Coming Through the Rye." "Old Mr. Rayfield" likes to hear the Tirwell girls perform duets on the pianoforte. It is a new instrument and superior to the one at Waverley, which of course must be old, old, having been in the family since before Belle was born and brought all the way from Franklin Forest. And Lotty lost one of her shoes in the mud by the spring-branch. Love and kisses.

Miss is enraptured with her letters. She shows them around the circle gathered on the front porch in the evening. Too bad for the silk dress to have been spoiled. But do the children not write charming letters? They are sealed with Mr. Tirwell's seal ring. Lotty's quill scratches somewhat, and blots, but the crosses and circles at the end of the page are unmistakable hugs and kisses. The crosses must be the kisses and the circles hugs, or possible it is the other way round. No matter, love is in every stroke of the pen.

Miss takes her little lap-desk on her knees. She writes a note to each of her dear ones away from home. Judith and Maria send their respects and wishes for good health. Miss closes the lid of the lap-desk. She gives the letters to Godfrey to take to the stage at the Beech and Brook Tavern.

The Hoopers are building a house in the grove of chestnut trees on the ridge above Waverley. In the mean time the bride and groom return from a visit to friends in Amherst County. They reside with the elder Hoopers in the little wooden house on Main Street. Mrs. Leonard Hooper enters immediately into the schemes and work of the ladies' committee for the building of the Episcopal church.

The ladies meet once a week in the court-house. They sew. They sell cakes, bread, and candy, fancy-work. Mr. Lester says all the timber needed for the church may be cut from his woodlands. Bricklayer Poltreen says he will give one day's labour free every week as soon as actual construction is started. In November there will be a concert at the Academy for the benefit of the new church. Mr. Menckel will play for it. Mrs. Hooper, junior, will sing Italian songs. Young ladies will form a chorus, and there will be a male quartet.

All Belair is working for the erection of the Episcopal church.

"I pray that my son may be the first baby to be christened in the new church," prays Charlotte Tirwell every day. A son! a son!

The Tirwell travellers return to Waverley in the last week in October. They are full of news, but oh! so glad to get home again. That is the best thing about travelling abroad, getting home again. The silk dress over which the soup was poured is not so badly injured after all. And Lotty sings all her new-learned songs and pieces. Pa promises her the guitar for Christmas. A really and truly real guitar.

CHAPTER XXIV

"Pickwick Papers," "Sketches by Boz." Mr. Tirwell reads every word, and the novels that come later. Boz turns out to be a Mr. Charles Dickens, an Englishman. The novels appear in instalments in America. Tirwell is delighted with the wit and humour. He carries the magazines about the place wherever he goes, and he reads choice bits of humour to any one who will give him a moment to listen. Belle and Lotty are his chief auditors. Belle is old enough to be entertained, but Lotty only giggles because she sees her Pa and sister laughing.

"I do declare," says Lotty's Pa, "you laugh perpetually. Sometimes you laugh at just nothing at all. I do believe that if I shook a dry bush over your head, you would go into fits of amusement."

And he does. He shakes a dry bough about Lotty's ears. She retreats; Pa follows. Spasms of laughter from Lotty. Tears streaming down her cheeks. Hysterics. The game amuses Lotty's Pa hugely. He dubs Belle, Florence Dombey, because she is so gentle and dear; Lotty is the Marchioness while Martha is little Nell.

The autumn passes. Winter comes. Leaping fires in the great caverns of fireplaces, and the ladies with their slippers toasting on the tops of the high brass fenders. The Twitchwells rumble off in the ancient barouche. They go to Pine Grove for the Christmas. Two of Coz Macey's daughters arrive at Waverley for an extended visit: the Misses Roxana and Ophelia Macey of Liberty Hall. The bloom of girlhood is gone and they are settling down to a resigned spinsterhood. Miss Roxana is reputed to be learned in the Latin tongue; Miss Ophelia in cookery. They consider it remarkable that their Coz Charlotte should be expectant again. A woman of her years should have ceased child-bearing.

But Charlotte is filled with happy thankfulness at her condition. She prays with fervour for a son to take away her shame for having presented her husband with three daughters. A son! This child will surely be a son. Tirwell is happy and expectant. He fully expects to triumph over Tony Lester. Robert Armistead Tirwell, junior. Winter and spring, and then the lying-in for the son. The months pass so tediously.

A cold May; rain and wind. It is the day. Miss lies in the great solemn bed in the chamber. Females surround her, old black Betsy in charge of them. She is a midwife of wide experience. Even Judith must give place to Betsy. The local surgeon, Dr. Spooner, is in attendance.

Because of the rain and the blustering gale the windows are closed. Uncle Jemmy, very old and infirm, with Mr. Menckel, sits by a fire in the library. The young ladies, Belle and Lotty, leading little Martha by the hand, cross the road to the new house of Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Hooper. They will spend the day with their dear friend and erstwhile governess, the former Miss Brownall. . . .

Tirwell cannot endure to be quiet. He shuts himself

up in his office with accounts, but only for a few minutes. Out he lunges to swear at two little negro maids snickering down the passageway. Then he must speak to the overseer at the side door. And he must give Godfrey some orders to fill up-the-street.

"Damme, how can you two men sit so quietly over the fire?" he thunders at Mr. Steppleton and the music-master in the library.

"'Pears to me, Robert," remarks Uncle Jemmy, "you are taking upon yourself all the pains of the labour. Have some toddy, man. 'Twill quiet your nerves."

Robert gulps a glass of toddy. He snatches down his high hat and his shawl from the peg in the hall. Up and down the front porch he paces in the wind and the rain, his shawl flapping behind him, his hat crushed over his brows to make it stick on his head. How long can the suspense and the anxiety last?

"Lors-a-massy, ef 'tain't a gal!" exclaims Betsy receiving the new human from Dr. Spooner.

Judith peers over her shoulder. "Hieish, 'ooman, don' yu' talk so loud. Don' yu' let Miss hear dem words; not yit. Hit ud kill 'er sho'."

"Hain't hit er putty li'l' thing!" Maria explodes. "Hain't she got lots er har on her haid?"

Dr. Spooner is busy with the mother. She is so weak and exhausted. She lies limp and white in the valley of the immense feather bed. Miss Roxana Macey tiptoes in with a cup of strong black coffee.

Aunt Christian stands at the door. "Praise de good Lord, hit's all over at las'," she breathes.

"A fine baby girl," Dr. Spooner whispers Miss Macey. "I doubt Mr. Tirwell will be much disappointed it is not a son, but he can well be proud of such a fine daughter."

Miss rallies. "The baby," she whispers, "is he all

right? Let me see my child. Have you told Mr. Tirwell his son has come?"

"No, Miss, dear Coz," soothes Miss Roxy. "Not yet. Rest a little first. The baby is all right. Coz Robert will be told directly."

There is great to-do among the women. Who will break the news that the baby is another girl? No one dares. Dr. Spooner is preparing to leave. He flatly refuses to face the father's disappointment. On the porch in the wind and the rain, Tirwell hastens to and fro. The moisture stands in bright beads on the woolly nap of his shawl. Miss is sleeping.

In an hour's time Miss Roxana Macey gives her cap a determined pull. She takes her sister by the hand. The two of them present themselves before the anxious father walking furiously back and forth on the front porch.

"La, sir," says Miss Roxy, "it's all over now. The baby is bouncing fine. You are the father of as fine a girl as ever man was sire to."

Tirwell stops dead in his tracks. He takes off his top-hat, looking inside as though the baby might be in the lining. Then he claps it on his head again, draws his shawl closer about him, and passes by the sisters without a word. He goes into his office and shuts and locks the door. For three days he will not come out, nor allow any one to enter. Three times a day old Hannibal lays a tray of food on the floor outside the door, raps, and steals away. A heavy cloud hangs over Waverley. And the inclement cold and rain continue.

Miss lies in her bed weeping. The new child wails weakly on Judith's knees. Tiny unwelcome daughter, Mara.

Tirwell departs from home. He goes in the stage, a negro boy for body-servant and companion. The baby is not a week old, and the mother is still ill in bed. She

weeps all the time and cannot bear to hold the new child.

"Shame on you, Tirwell!" rebukes James Steppleton. "Why will you absent yourself from home at this time? When do you propose to return, sir?"

"My goings and comings are my own damned business, sir! What do I here in a bevy of women? Daughters! Let the women rear the females they bear."

"Come, come, man," quavers the old gentleman. "Your chagrin must be bridled. Your duty and your place are by the side of your wife and children. At least go in to speak to Charlotte. You have humbled and distressed her beyond measure by your sullen rage. It is no fault of hers that the baby is a girl, no more than yours. You did not beget a man-child. If you desert her, the shame and sorrow might kill her."

"Mind your own damned business!" rages Tirwell. "Keep your old nose out of my affairs!"

"Gad, fellow, if I were ten years younger, I'd call you out for this." Mr. Steppleton is purple with fury. He chokes. He lunges against his chair, sits down heavily, breathing in gasps. "God! God!"

So Tirwell departs. Sorrow and shame shroud Waverley. But Miss revives. She takes her baby to her bosom with a rush of love and desire. Little Mara! It's not her fault she is unwelcome. She must never know. Fortitude and resolution course through Miss's veins. Dignity crowns her; nobility and a sort of splendid beauty illuminate her countenance. The reins of government, the affairs of the household and the estate, Mistress Tirwell grasps and wields with decision and ability. She is mistress of Waverley, mother of children, responsible for affairs. Twice every month she receives a brief and business-like letter from her absent lord. He sends her money. He instructs her in the management of the estate.

Tirwell is on the way to Mexico. He will put money into the project for a canal across the isthmus, Panama or Tehuantepec. He will speculate in Texas and the West. He will be gone a long time. Virginia is now no place for a man of adventure and abilities. Louisiana is full of promise. New Orleans is a city of opportunities. Robert Armistead Tirwell will make a new name for himself, and a new fortune.

Miss speaks proudly of their Pa to her daughters. He is away from home on pleasure travels, on business pursuits. He will win fame. The family fortune will be greatly increased. Beyond a doubt, now that the tide of emigration has set in westward . . . and there is talk of gold in California.

But the chief crisis in the country is the slavery question. Robert is writing stirring articles in the New Orleans *Picayune* on the subject. He sends bundles of the papers home for the family to read. The girls are very proud of their Pa. Beyond a doubt Southern sentiment will force the annexation of Texas so as to increase the slave-holding territory of the country. There is a great to-do on the subject.

Texas comes into the Union as a slave-holding State ; Florida too. But Iowa and Wisconsin soon balance them as free States. More slave-holding territory is needed by the South. Texas claims that her boundary by right extends south-west as far as the Rio Grande, but the Mexican Government disputes the claim. President Polk casts the die of war. He orders General Zachary Taylor to occupy the disputed region.

Miss hears that her husband has left New Orleans. He has enlisted under General Taylor. He is in Texas. Every night and morning his safety is prayed for by the family on their knees at family prayer. There is great rejoicing when the enemy general, Santa Anna, is defeated, the City of Mexico reduced, and vast territories

annexed to the United States. But the chief joy at Waverley is for the end of the war and the assured safety of Robert Tirwell. He writes again of the golden possibilities of a canal across either Panama or Tehuantepec. A box of handsome silver comes to Waverley from Mexico. Mr. Tirwell is mindful of his own. And he sends Miss money for a mourning brooch when her Uncle Jemmy Steppleton dies. He is glad to learn that she inherits her uncle's fortune.

How fast the years come and go!

CHAPTER XXV

How fast the years come and go! Anno Domini 1851!

Mrs. Tirwell sits at the head of her breakfast-table, two daughters on each side of her. Little Mara is elevated to the proper height for the table by sitting upon a huge volume of Shakespeare. Her bib has stiff strings. They stick out straight behind through the mass of glossy curls. Opposite the mistress sit Mr. Menckel and Miss Roxana Macey.

Miss Roxana is a permanent guest at Waverley. She teaches Martha and Mara. Martha is well advanced in her Latin grammar. Mara is lisping AMO, AMAS, AMAT. Miss Roxana saw no occasion to return home after her mother, the redoubtable family "Coz," passed on and her brother and his wife became master and mistress of Liberty Hall. Her sister, Miss Ophelia Macey, hesitates between two offers of marriage: Mr. Menckel; Bachelor Bassett. She accepts the Bassett. She is mistress of Swan Creek. Poor Bachelor Bassett does not improve in appearance with matrimony. He is more bucolic than than ever. His wife likewise coarsens on the farm.

Miss sits at the head of her breakfast-table. Judith

holds dominion over the younger servants coming and going from kitchen to dining-room. Uncle Hannibal is still nominally butler, but he is too infirm to execute the duties of his office. Now and then he polishes the flat silver, and always the big silver milk bowl. Judith receives the covered dishes from the hands of her underlings at the pantry door. Judith hands around the board the hot muffins, the crisp waffles, and the fresh plates of beaten biscuits.

"Mr. Menckel, do, sir, help yourself to biscuits," urges Miss. "Mara, not such large mouthfuls, if you please, dear. Roxy, do make the child control herself."

"The new tavern is finished," says Belle, carrying on an interrupted conversation. "Miss Buffard's small Jenny told Maria that the furniture and fixings will be moved from the old tavern to-day."

"What with the railroad and all," comments Miss, "and the new tavern being called a hotel, our calm country life will be destroyed completely." Miss sighs. "Times change, don't they?"

"Surely, Meestress Tirwell, we must keep up with the march of progress. The country will ultimately be a network of railroads." Mr. Menckel butters his hot biscuit.

"For my part," declares Miss Macey, "I am quite dizzy with all this progress. The stage and the packet-boat are more to my mind."

"And think of all the strangers that are likely to invade our peaceful retirement," adds Miss. "That is just what this new hotel expects. Goodness knows what sort of adventurers and undesirables may avail themselves of the cars to wander about the country."

"But I am quite enthusiastic about it all," says Belle. "I am glad we shall be brought into such close touch with the outside world. How easy it will be to travel to Richmond and Norfolk! So simple a matter

to reach Baltimore and Philadelphia, even New York. How I long to visit those great cities ! "

" That's your Pa in you, sweet." Miss smiles. She is used to treating the subject of her absent husband easily, as though he were away from home for a very short visit. " Your Pa never was content with our quiet plantation life. He always pined to be up and about the world."

" Oh, I do so wish my Pa would come home again," says Lotty. " I do so love him and want to see him."

" I want to see my Pa too," chirrups Mara. " I want to see him that, that much." And she extends her little arms as far apart as possible. " Will he love me very, very much, Miss, when he comes home ? "

" Well, if he can't come home, I wish he would send for us all to stay with him in New Orleans. How I long to see New Orleans and to hear the French opera there ! " Lotty looks wistfully across the table at Mr. Menckel.

" Didn't I undestand you to remark, Coz Charlotte, that Coz Robert had left New Orleans and gone to the City of Mexico ? "

" To be sure, Roxy. And Lotty knows her Pa has not been in New Orleans for the past six months. For my part I think he had better continue editing the *Picayune.* I have no faith in this Tehuantepec scheme."

" What very interesting experiences Meester Tirwell is enjoying ! " says Mr. Menckel. " It is a great education to travel and see the world."

" Judith, tell Maria we shan't want any more waffles. Mr. Menckel, sir, will you have your coffee-cup refilled ? " Miss looks about the board. " Roxy, send up your cup. No more coffee ? Then, are we all through ? " Miss pushes back her chair.

At last Prissy is permitted in the dining-room. She enters carrying a wooden basin of steaming water.

Judith collects the silver. Miss seats herself at a side table. The tub of water is placed in front of her. Very carefully she washes the silver and gives it to Belle, piece by piece, to wipe dry. Then Judith puts it all away. This task is the time-honoured daily duty of the mistress of the household.

Miss is about her housekeeping. She sees the cook at the pantry door. She gives orders to Judith, to Maria. She visits the cubby where Uncle Hannibal sits. She inspects the kitchen. The house-servants are assigned their tasks for the day. The house is in a bustle ; bed-making, sweeping, polishing floors, carrying out slop pails, fetching in fresh water.

Miss ties on her sun-bonnet. She hangs her leather key-basket on her arm. Accompanied by a small black boy, she visits the hen-house to collect the eggs, to inspect her fowls. The small boy carries the eggs to the pantry in a basket. He brings back another basket and proceeds with his mistress into the garden. There the gardener is interviewed. The vegetables for the day are gathered and placed in the small boy's basket.

Mr. Menckel is seen walking in the box-walk. He is enjoying his morning pipe. Belle and Lotty are practicing duets on the piano in the parlour. Miss Roxy, with Mara hanging to her skirts, and assisted by Martha, is cutting flowers for the vases in the house. She snips the stems with a large pair of shears. She lays her floral trophies gently in the shallow pannier that Martha holds out to her. Maria is putting bedclothes on the ledges of the sunny windows.

" Yo' all see dem hummin' birds ? " Maria calls down to the party in the flower beds. " Hit sho' is er sign er powerful hot weather."

" La, Roxy," says Miss, joining the flower gatherers, " the wasps are beginning to swarm after the grapes. Remus must bag them as soon as possible."

"It is the hot weather. They are ripening early. But here comes my sister!"

Mrs. "Bachelor" Bassett rides into the yard. She is mounted on a rawboned gray mare. She wears a faded and mud-bespotted blue cloth habit and incongruously a pink linen sunbonnet. A small black boy runs out from the region of the back to take her bridle. Mrs. Bassett leaps down. She hooks up her habit at one side so that she can walk.

"Good-morning," she says. "Have you nothing better to do than pick flowers? I was up at daylight. My churning is done. My bread is baked. And here I am. I hear the new hotel will be opened to-day. I have hired one of our black boys to Mr. Andy Buffard to be a waiter in the new establishment. I am going down there now to arrange with him about Rhœs's wages. Madame Menricus has asked Bassett and me to picnic with her and her pupils in the meadow the day the first cars arrive. The whole county will be here for that. Of course you will be there to see the engine and the cars?" Mrs. Bassett seizes a fistful of fragrant candytuft, crushes it in her fingers and sniffs loudly at her aromatic handful.

"So you have hired Rhœs to the landlord of the Beech and Brook Hotel? How can you spare a man from the farm? This is haying time too." Mrs. Tirwell disapproves of letting the black people work away from their own home and owners. "But come into the house, Ophelia. Let Maria bring you a fan. Judith will make you some iced sangaree. You must be tired and warm after your ride all the way from Swan Creek."

"No, thank you, Coz," rasps Mrs. Bassett. "I just came by to see how you all did. Roxy, have you had any letters from Liberty Hall? Brother rarely writes to me. True, I never have time to send him a line. But I like to know if they are all well at home. When will you

come out and make me a visit at Swan Creek? Basset vows you have not been near us since last fall. We need your refining touch in our rough life." Mrs. Bassett laughs loudly at her humour. Refinement is not on her cards. Work, and rough work, is now her aim and ideal. She aspires to it as the proper helpmeet of her farming husband and lord.

"Let me entreat you to rest awhile. Come into the house," says Miss. "Martha, run into the house directly and tell Judith to make some sangaree and cut some of the fruit cake for your Cousin Ophelia."

"Pray excuse me, Coz Charlotte," vociferates the country lady, "'deed I haven't time to tarry. I must see Buffard about Rhœs, call at Miss Anne Amelia's for some cambric, and buy a bottle of physic from Dr. Spooner. I promised to be back at Swan Creek before noon. The women are sewing to-day. The old black Patsy is sick. She must have her physic. I left orders to cup her as I came away."

"Well, tell Mr. Bassett I'll buy twelve of his Berkshire shoats as soon as they are old enough to leave the sow. Can he spare me twelve, do you think, Ophelia? I can't let winter overtake me with an empty smokehouse. Our pigs have not done well this year." Miss walks with Ophelia toward her waiting steed.

"That's the way it goes," remarks the rustic lady. "Last year we had nothing but a lot of runts. The boar broke into one pen and killed the only litter of razorbacks we had. Too bad. Bad luck one year, good luck the next. The pigs are fine porkers this season. Bassett will be glad to sell you twelve. He has more than he knows what to do with."

The visitor mounts her horse from the block at the side door. "Well, good-bye. Drive out to see us." She is gone.

"Why will she call her husband just blunt Bassett?"

asks Miss of herself. "Such a difference between the sisters. And Ophelia was so gentle and sweet as a young girl."

Hot, hot weather. The entire population of the county pours into Belair on the day the first steam cars come on the new railroad. The train carries officials and a bevy of elegant ladies from the eastern cities. There are speeches. The cars are decorated with flags and wreaths. In the evening there is a rout in the town hall. The new hotel, moved from the court-house square down to the railway station, does a thriving business.

"Belair witnesses the inauguration of a new era to-day," declares one of the orators.

"Yes, it is a new era," breathes Miss to herself, and sighs.

CHAPTER XXVI

NIGHT; over the house and lawns of Waverley floods of clear moonlight; within, the household sleeps, all save Miss. In her chamber she sits at a writing-table; two candles flank her bowed form. She is writing accounts in a big ledger, and she is writing entries in her own personal diary. For seven years, ever since the departure of her husband, she indites to him her secret thoughts and the happenings of her life, though he will never see the record which she keeps. The two large books lie before her, one open, one shut. They are both covered with brown velvet. Inside the covers the leather bindings are already worn.

Miss bends over her task. The candles gutter slightly in the furtive currents of warm air that now and then seep through the closed shutters. It is very hot, but the shutters are closed so that the candle flames may remain comparatively steady until the writing is done. The

yellow lights make shadows come and go over the face and bare shoulders of the writer. She wears a dressing-sack and her hair hangs loose about her ears. The hair is still abundant and rich despite the strands of gray. It is freshly combed and brushed. It is glossy.

Scratch, scratch. Miss is writing with one of these new-fangled steel pens. So different from the spluttering pliant quills of old times. Goose-quills. Miss is not sure she likes the metal better than the quills. But she is provided with old-fashioned pens in case she tires of the new kind. Near at hand, in a cup of shot, they are stuck. One gray, one white. The candlelight throws gigantic shadows of them against the wall opposite the table. And Miss has a penknife handy.

So silent in the great house. In a trundle bed beside the ceremonious four-poster of the mistress, Mara sleeps. Miss's hand moves slowly. Scratch, scratch. Tedious work, accounts. From a sheaf of bills and memoranda Miss copies the items of receipt and expenditure into her ledger. Items, and columns of neat figures added up at the bottom. Carpenter's accounts. Miller's. The smithing. Household supplies—tea, coffee, sugar, spice. The overseer's many items. And so forth and so forth—accounts, receipts and expenditures for the house and the plantation.

At last the business is done. Miss wipes her pen carefully on a penwiper, black cloth in a fat rosette with a shiny shoe button in the centre. She puts up her hand to brush back a strand of hair falling over her face. She massages her right hand with her left. She runs her eye over the pages of the account-book. Expensive, the cost of maintaining a plantation. Most that comes in is eaten up at once again by the needs of the estate. The black people are a great burden. They must have food and shelter and clothes. When they are ill, they must be cared for; when they die, they must

be buried. So many non-workers—old people, children, and the incurably lazy. Negro slaves. They are like children, trusting, expecting, receiving everything as a matter of course from their masters. Even the products they raise about their own cabins and planting-patches they sell at a good price to the people at the great house, produce and wares come by, of course, at the master's expense. Slaves! But who is master, who is slave? the white or the black people? Miss ponders the problem. But there can be no answer; not yet.

Miss takes up the wooden sand-shaker. She sprinkles the page with the shiny black dust to dry the ink. She blows it off and closes the ledger, laying it aside. Done! business. She sighs. Then a new light comes into her eyes. She reaches out her hand for the other book. This is her relaxation. This her private joy, writing in her journal, speaking with her pen to her husband. It is the only form of conjugal life she has known since Robert went away.

"Ah, beloved, my own," sighs Miss, "if you but knew my heart! Surely the love of my soul will draw you back to me."

She puts by the scratching steel pen. She takes into her fingers one of the old familiar quills, dips it in the ink-well. She writes:

"To-day I must tell you, my dear husband, that all goes well with us at Waverley. God's blessing is upon us. Surely He is blessing us. We have health. We are a devoted family. There are no losses, no disasters on the place. But one thing is lacking. It is the presence of the master.

"Yesterday I made Remus bag the grapes. I have bought twelve shoats from Mr. 'Bachelor' Bassett. They were brought over from Swan Creek to-day. I ordered them loosed in the lot beyond the orchard. It is dear to have to buy pigs, but our own litters have not

turned out well this year. Many of the young pigs died from a strange epidemic of cholera. The disease seems to be stayed now.

" The first train of cars on the new railroad came to Belair three days ago. The line ends here for the present. But the hills and fields for many miles to the west of us are gashed with cuttings for the construction of more track. Sometimes, at night, we can hear the workmen singing in their camps. Sometimes there is the sound of brawling. I shall be glad when they move on. It is demoralising to the negroes who belong here to have these outsiders so near. They *will* make whisky for sale, and wines, and beer. But . . . We all went down to the spring meadows to see the train arrive. There was a great concourse of country people. I believe little work was done anywhere that day. It was like a holiday. The train was late, more than three hours. But everybody had a picnic lunch and enjoyed conversing with friends and acquaintances. At last, in the afternoon, the train came. It was decorated with flags and wreaths. The cars were filled with people from Wynch's Ferry (which by the by, is now to be called Wynchville, as being more elegant than the old name, so they say). My dear Kitty Langley accompanied her brother Charles. I was so charmed to see them. Mr. Charles has some stock in the railway company and is some kind of official, I believe. Kitty told me what it was, but the title meant nothing to my woman's mind. Mr. Langley invited me, with numerous others, to take a ride on the cars. But I could not bring myself to do so. The throbbings and explosions of steam from the powerful engine made me think some accident might befall us. I could not be spared from my home and children just yet. Besides, the piercing scream of the whistle and the constant banging of the bell gave me a headache. I was surprised to see Madame Menricus, not

only riding in the cars, but with Mr. Langley actually inspecting the locomotive. How she could do it with the fierce heat of the furnace and the jets of smoke and steam escaping all around her, I cannot for the life of me understand. She is a most intrepid female, and her daughter likewise.

"The new tavern (I can scarcely bring myself to call it hotel) is crowded with guests. Every day a train arrives with more people, but there is a law of compensation, the train also takes away visitors when it returns in the evening. None of the people seem to want to remain long in Belair, and it is just as well, for doubtless they would not prove desirable friends or even acquaintances for us. I feel that since the running of the cars a great change has come to us. It is like living in a house from which the doors have been removed. Exposed."

The end of the page. Miss reads over carefully all that she writes. She shakes sand over the page and blows it off again. The clock in the hall chimes one. Miss snuffs the candles, smooths back her hair, and turns over the page. She begins to write once more.

"The time is an hour past midnight. But I do not weary of writing these secret, unknown words to you, my beloved. Though you will never see these pages, yet upon them I record for you all I do and all I would say to you if you were here. I miss you so! Though I have not seen you for seven years, yet I love you more every day. In one respect I am glad for you to be away from Virginia, for your travels satisfy the profoundest aspirations of your ambition. In our quiet rural life your superior energies and gifts would undoubtedly rust. Outside in the great world you have opportunity for the exercise of your talents and the freedom to take your rightful place amongst men of affairs. But do you never long to see us? Not me, for I am aware that I

have sadly disappointed you in the matter of presenting you with an heir. I deserve my ' widowhood.' But our children, the dear delightful girls, do you not pine to see them ? Belle is so beautiful. She was twenty-one in April. And Lotty is the life of the place. Many gallant young gentlemen visit them constantly. I have not observed, however, that their hearts are engaged by any of the flattering attentions paid to them. When I was Belle's age, I was already a mother. Ah, me, a mother, yes ! But if I might have been the mother of a son ! God forgive me !

" You should see Martha. Her hair is like a radiant nimbus . . . and her eyes, stars. Madame Menricus speaks so highly of her scholastic attainments. Miss Flavia has asked her to assist in the teaching of mathematics. She is a very clever girl. Mr. Menckel says her performance on the pianoforte is more brilliant than that of either Belle or Lotty. It distresses me that none of my daughters has learned to play the harp. Sometimes I play it for them, but not often now. The instrument is old, and I am sadly out of practice.

" The girls have written to thank you for the charming beads you sent them from Vera Cruz. They wear them with their party dresses and display the pretty gifts with pride. I have also written you a letter to acknowledge your remittance of money.

" There is not much to tell you about our black people. Uncle Hannibal is almost incapacitated now. But Christian still seems vigorous enough. I brought up two new girls from the quarters recently to help her in the kitchen. There are four there now. One of them is sure to learn to be a good cook. Judith, good, faithful Judith, is ever by me. Her son and daughter, the mulatto boy and girl, are invaluable. Godfrey is an excellent carpenter ; Maria indispensable as maid. I often wonder who their father can be. Of course, I would not question

Judith, for the world. She is quite contented in her married life. She has two children by Taft. They are inky black. I would not say, even in these secret pages of my diary, what sometimes has been in my mind as to the fatherhood of Godfrey and Maria. I put the thought away from me . . . yet I am aware of the volatile passions of youth, the white youth of our Southern plantations, and the easy . . . but, no, I cannot, I must not allow, even here, such thoughts to form. . . . Whoever the father of Godfrey and Maria may be, they belong here in this house and will always be treated with kindness and care."

Whatever Miss does not write, her thoughts disturb her so that she must needs cease her chronicle. She rises from her seat, throws open the blinds, leans out in the bath of white moonlight. The wind immediately blows out the candles. The soft, kind light of the moon floods the interior of the chamber, laying a veil of silver over the form of the woman at the window. For a moment she stands there, then kneels down at the embrasure. Summer night ; and the clock in the hall strikes two.

CHAPTER XXVII

GODFREY comes to the back door. "Whar's Miss?" he asks of Prissy, flouncing around with inconsequential affairs.

"Cyarn' see'er," snaps Prissy. She asserts her authority.

"Huccum ah cyarn' see 'er?"

"Ah ain' got no time ter be botherin' wid yu, nigger," counters Prissy. "Ah got mo' ter do den carry messages fer yu."

"Ah ain't ax yu ter car'y no messages. Ah jes' ax yu whar is Miss."

"Well, what Miss yu want? Thar's Ole Miss an' thar's Young Miss. Whichun yu wants?" Exasperating Prissy.

Godfrey is perplexed. "Ah wants to see Ole Miss."

"Den she cyarn' see ye, 'case she's too busy. Why don' yu go 'bout yo affairs? I done hear Aunt Christian tell yu she want dat bench at de kitchen do' mended in de back. An' yu dressed up, too. Got yo' coat on! Whar's yo' overhauls? Why ain't yu workin' like er man?"

Godfrey is patient. He knows how difficult it is to get by Prissy. "Ef yu please, Aunt Prissy——" he begins again.

"Don' yu aunt me!" breaks out the irascible negro woman. "Dat won't git yu nuthin." Ah tells yu ah ain't foolin' wid no yaller boys. Yu go on." Impossible woman. Bad-tempered and unreasonable Prissy.

At this moment Miss herself comes on the scene. "What is this, Prissy? Godfrey? Do you want to speak to me, Godfrey? Certainly. Come into the office."

Miss leads the way into the house. Godfrey cannot forbear a glance of triumph at Prissy, but she flips about the entry unconcerned, her back to him. "Niggers was'in' Miss's time," she mutters.

In the office Godfrey stands across the room from Miss. She sits at the desk. He stands by the door. She looks at him kindly.

"Well?" she asks.

Godfrey twirls his hat. He swallows, lowering his eyes.

"I'se in trouble, Miss," he says.

"Yes? What sort of trouble?"

"Me an' Aunt Christian's gran'daughter, Rhea, we wants ter git mar'ied."

Miss looks deeply shocked. Godfrey reads her mind in her face.

"Noarm, Miss; 'tain't like dat," he says. "We don' have ter, we jest wants ter." Godfrey is himself deeply embarrassed to have to make an announcement and an explanation at the same time. "We jest wants ter know kin we."

What a relief! Miss breaks into a radiant smile.

"I would like to see you well married, Godfrey. But what does Aunt Christian say?"

"Rhea's skeered uv Aunt Christian. We dassent say nuthin' ter Aunt Christian lessen yu knows erbout hit fust."

Miss appreciates the point. Aunt Christian is indeed formidable.

"I will speak to Christian," says Miss. "If she is willing for you to have Rhea, I will not object. When did you want to be married, you and Rhea?"

"Same time's Maria." Godfrey looks more abashed than ever.

"Maria!" Miss is astonished. "Does Maria want to get married?"

"Yassam; ter dat boy at de hotel, dat Rhœs whar comes frum Mr. Bassett's at Swan Creek. Maria done ast me ter tell yu, Miss. She an' Rhœs both, dey put hit all on me."

"Good gracious me! This complicates matters mightily. I shall have to speak to Maria about it. I wish she could have chosen one of our own Tirwell people. Perhaps Mr. Bassett may not be willing for Rhœ to marry off his own plantation. Perhaps he may not wish to buy Maria, nor to sell Rhœs."

"Yassam, Miss, Ah knows hit's all mighty hard. Maria knows hit too. She's turrible skeered, Miss."

"Have either of you spoken to your mother on this subject of your double love-affairs?"

"Noarm, Miss, we dassen' tell nobody till yu knows hit."

Miss is deeply touched at the concern, the confidence, and the loyalty of her servants. She rises from her chair, smiling, though serious.

"Well, I will consider it all, Godfrey. I will consult with Christian and Judith, and I will see Mr. Bassett. For your own case I can foresee little trouble, but for Maria . . . well that is more difficult. I will see what can be done. I will let you know later."

Godfrey and Maria to be married. A double wedding. The young ladies insist that it shall take place in the dining-room. They will dress the two brides. The arrangements are made. Mr. Bassett sees no reason why he should buy Maria and thus deprive Mrs. Tirwell of her valuable maid, unless, of course, Mrs. Tirwell does not wish to buy Rhœs. Rhœs is hired out, anyway. Bassett can hire another man to Andy Buffard at the hotel if Mrs. Tirwell buys Rhœs. But Mr. Buffard himself steps in with the proposal to buy Rhœs himself from Mr. "Bachelor" Bassett. Rhœs can work at the hotel and live at Waverley with his wife if

Mrs. Tirwell is willing to agree to such an arrangement. It is settled.

Godfrey and Maria to be married. Double wedding. Miss asks Dr. Tissert, the rector of the parish of Belair, to come to Waverley for the ceremony. Mrs. Bassett comes, because of Rhœs, and Mr. Buffard with his rather elderly sister, Miss Anne Amelia, hanging on his arm. Miss Belle plays the wedding march on the piano in the parlour, doors open into the hall and the dining-room, then slips through to watch the ceremony close at hand. All the family at Waverley stand against one side of the large room, and on the other side, Aunt Christian, Judith, and the house-servants. The back porch is filled with smiling, eager black faces to watch the marriage.

The dining-room table is made as small as possible by taking out all the leaves. It is rolled to one side. A bower of flowers fills the window opposite the back door. Here the ceremony is performed. The brides wear white dresses, and even veils. They carry large bouquets of flowers from the garden. The bridegrooms have real cloth clothes, Tirwell's, found by Miss in an old trunk in the attic.

The wedding. When it is over, the white people shake hands with the happy couples, then the black people, and they go out on the back porch to a plentiful supper of ham, sweet potatoes, corn, pickles, hot pone, and watermelon. In the parlour there is handed tea for the white guests.

CHAPTER XXVIII

In the fall of 1852 the Indian summer lasts a long time. The sun is a warm red and the air balmy. The odour of dry hayfields and harvested acres filters with every breeze throughout all the countryside. The leaves are browning slowly. The autumn roses begin to bloom. A few elderly sweet-williams, bleeding-hearts, and cape jasmines linger to show that summer is not over. The corn is shocked; the wheat threshed. Cider mills are working in many a farm-yard. Huge pumpkins redden on the hillsides.

Robert Tirwell is coming home. Miss receives a letter. He writes from Norfolk. He is with a party of gentlemen. The Tehuantepec canal venture is a failure. Robert is tired of the hot South, particularly Texas and Mexico. The people in those parts are nothing but savages, the worst type of foreigners, half-breeds, Indian and negro. The crying need of the times is political campaigning in the States, notable Virginia. The slavery question is acute. There is even the possibility of civil strife, which God forbid. But Virginia and the South need every intelligent man to work night and day for the political integrity of the slave-holding States, the rights of those States as contrasted with the industrialised Northern States and their unreasonable demands with regard to labour, their doctrinaire assumptions on the purely arbitrary logic about the Union and the superiority of the Federal Government. The very sovereignty of Virginia is at stake. The union of the States is entirely dependent on the good will of the individual units, but it is a mere agreement. There is no *de facto* union, certainly not if the powers of the several States are endangered.

Such a long letter. Miss does not half understand it. Plainly Mr. Tirwell is fired with a new ambition. Patriotism brings him home. There will be speeches, conventions, campaigning. The land-owning South must be saved . . . all its capital in negro labour, all its wealth and stability in farming the great plantations.

After years of absence, Robert Tirwell is coming home. The household at Waverley is turned upside down to prepare for the advent of the master. Such scrubbing and cleaning within, such trimming and raking without. Aunt Christian, with her army of helpers in the kitchen, goes about elaborate preparations. The young ladies sew and sew on new dresses to wear to welcome their Pa. And Miss has her lemon-coloured satin with the bead fringe altered, renovated, made like new.

Robert Tirwell is coming home. Miss's heart beats. Will he be changed? Will he find her aged, unlovely? She keeps his letter in her bosom. Twenty times a day she reads it anew. Not a hint of ill-feeling, not a suggestion of personal estrangement. "I can scarcely wait to embrace my precious wife. God bless you. Your Robert." And his love to the girls. "I shall not recognise them since they are grown. . . . And Mara almost a young lady. Shall we change her name to Felicia? For 'sorrow shall be turned into joy.'"

Miss Roxy Macey fills the house with flowers. The gardens are stripped for them. Uncle Hannibal comes out of his cubby, tottering, feeble, old. He puts on his dress coat. No one but he shall mix the juleps. When the whistle of the train blows will be time enough to crack the ice. All the servants in the house are dressed in their best to do honour to the return of the master.

Godfrey and Taft go to the depot to meet the train. The girls flutter about their chamber upstairs dressing to greet their Pa. Miss locks herself in her room to make her own preparations. Her heart beats so she can scarcely

breathe. She takes great care to adorn herself finely . . . the silk gown cut so that the round shoulders are exposed . . . long mitts on hands and arms . . . and the ear-rings and locket and clasp of the hair jewellery, Ma Steppleton's brown hair. In her hand the painted fan that Robert sent her from Havana . . . and fichu of point-lace.

The whistle is heard. The train from Wynchville is arriving. Miss looks about the chamber. All in order. Mara's trundle bed is gone to the girls' room above stairs, the great four-poster like a mountain of snow, so beaten up, so fresh, so white it is, and muslin curtains with pink satin bows about it. Miss and Judith together have hung the curtains on the tester just this morning. The bureau is so neat . . . a clean crocheted scarf over it . . . and drawers cleaned out for the master's things, the very drawers he always used to store his linen in. Miss puts her own belongings in the little chest of drawers from her old home at Belair Mansion. The bullet is still embedded in the side, though the wood is scratched and scarred around it, for Mara once tried to dig it out with her Ma's penknife. She does not succeed. She breaks the blade of the penknife. The bullet resists all efforts. There it is. How did it ever come there? That question is the point of departure for many romantic stories. Miss's daughters hear them many time, from Miss, from Prissy. And Prissy has embellishments of her own in the way of romance.

Miss looks around the chamber. She gives a last pat to her cap. She repairs to the pantry. "Do not crack the ice, Hannibal, until you hear the wheels of the carriage. Bring in the juleps yourself. Your master will rejoice to see you."

The young ladies flutter downstairs. Doves. Mr. Menckel is dressed up, too, in a blue coat and an old-fashioned stock with lace, and he carries his gold-headed

cane, a weapon or ornament only produced on occasions of the gravest importance. The last time is the day of the party when Miss Belle is twenty-one years old. The little German also wears his monstrous, ceremonious fob. It hangs out of his vest pocket.

The train comes. The family gathers in the front hall. At the first sound of carriage wheels, they will troop out on the piazza to welcome Pa home.

"Sit up straight, Mara," said Miss, "or you will crush your pretty dress. When I was a girl, my Ma never allowed my back to touch a chair. That's why I hold myself so well now."

Lotty comes close to whisper in her Ma's ear. "Maria laced me too tight, Miss. Do you think there is time for her to loosen my stays just a trifle. I can barely breathe. And I think one of my hoops is loose."

But Miss forbids any alteration in Lotty's costume that might make her late to greet her Pa. "Your dress sets perfectly," she says.

The house-servants begin to gather in the back porch. Half an hour since the train blew. Why do they not come? Little negro boys are posted at intervals along the route from the station to the house. They will run like lightning ahead of the approaching carriage to announce its coming. Why does it not come? Tension.

"Hyer-cum de car'age! Hyer she come!" Shouting telegraphs the news.

Now the sound of the wheels is heard, grinding on the drive. The vehicle swings around the circle. It is empty, save for Godfrey and Taft on the box and a pile of luggage within.

Miss runs down the steps. "What is the matter? Where is your master?" Her breath can scarcely come.

Godfrey jumps down. A crowd of servants gather at the corner of the house. They come to welcome their "marster." But where is he? Surely he is come,

because look at the amount of impedimenta in the carriage.

"Marster's down at the hotel, Miss," says Godfrey. "Dey's er lot er company down dar. Marse Robert's goin' ter make er speech arter de gent'men done had dey drinks. Dey's in de hotel, Miss. Marse Robert done sent me wid de car'age to bring all yu-all down ter de hotel ter hear de speeches." Godfrey turns to the gaping faces at the corner of the house. "Hyar, yu-all, come hep git dis bag'age outen de car'age so's Miss an' de ladies kin drive down ter de hotel."

Miss's fan is fluttering against her breast, one hand plucking at a flounce on her dress. The baggage is taken from the carriage quickly and into the house.

"Tell Maria and Judith and Prissy to bring our bonnets and shawls directly," orders Miss. "Your Pa wants us to come down to the hotel."

But what a strange place to appoint for a family reunion after eight or nine years' separation! At the public hotel; people coming and going; speech-making!

Tirwell is his old self and more. He is full of gaiety, full of spirits. Charming. He has so many stories to tell of his travels, his experiences in foreign parts. He is loud in his praises of the delightful American lady married to the Spaniard, Calderon de la Barca, who during his stay in the City of Mexico was Spanish ambassador to the Republic. Madame de la Barca entertains with distinction. In her drawing-rooms the *haut-monde* of the southern Republic is gathered. And there are so many curious things in the baggage. Presents for everybody; two bolts of fine silk for Miss; shawls, silver, knick-knacks; a silver timepiece for Mr. Menckel; and something for each of the old servants, Mexican dollars showing the eagle with the serpent in his beak.

Mr. Tirwell resumes life as though nothing had happened, as though he had come back from the briefest of pleasure trips. He is full of enthusiasm. His pamphlets are being broadcast. Everybody is reading them. And he has leading articles in most of the principal newspapers. He is going to speak up and down the land. He kisses his daughters repeatedly. He is devoted to his wife. He praises her well-preserved figure, her beauty. He adores little Mara.

And little Mara adores her Pa. She sits on his knee, pulling his watch-chain. She leans against his breast, whispering her love for him. She scampers out to the green-house to see if but one cape-jasmine is left to put in Pa's button-hole.

"And to think I have missed nine years of you, my pet!" Mara's Pa tweaks her ear. "How could I bear it? Roxy, my coz, you have made a fine scholar of this little lady. We must teach her Spanish." And Robert makes her repeat the words of a Mexican song after him. Then he sings a French song about Napoleon much carolled on the streets of New Orleans . . . "Parlez-vous de lui, Gran'mere" . . . it is called. Lotty catches the air and plays it on the guitar.

Tirwell inspects all the place. He rides over the plantation. He speaks with the black people in the fields, in the quarters. He is glad the smoke-house is so full of fine meat, and more to come at the later killing. The garden is in splendid order, the orchard flourishing. He jokes happily with Uncle Hannibal, who is put to it to make mint-juleps enough for his master's consumption.

So many improvements in Belair . . . the railroad, the hotel, the church. Madame Menricus sticks a cigar in her mouth and comes to call on the master of Waverley as though she were a man. Miss Flavia, too, though she does not smoke. They talk politics.

Visitors pour into Waverley. Bassetts, Lesters, Hoopers, Spooners. Andy Buffard sends with *his* compliments a bottle of fine Scotch. Even old man Buffard, from the tavern up the turnpike, is driven by one of his daughters in a gig to see the returned traveller in Belair. Old man Buffard mumbles his toothless jaws and wants to know what " Marster " Tirwell thinks the country is coming to with all the talk about abolition, unionism, and so forth. A carriageful of Langleys drives up from Wynchville to make a visit of several days.

Mrs. Leonard Hooper wraps herself in her once elegant velvet cloak and comes down to Waverley " expressly to pay my respects to my honoured once-employer."

" Doubtless, Mr. Tirwell, after all your wide travels, you think us poor country folk very dull indeed," Mrs. Hooper simpers.

" No, ma'am ; on the contrary, ma'am. I pronounce you charming." And he lays such emphasis on the pronoun that the former Miss Brownall blushes.

" Take my word for it, Lester," he says to the stout judge of the county court, " depend upon it, do not speculate in canal stock companies. There will never be a cutting across either Panama or Tehuantepec. Fortunes have been wasted in the enterprise."

" I trust your own fortune suffers no embarrassment ?" says Judge Tony.

" Embarrassment ! My dear man ! I withdrew just in time to save a mere remnant. As a matter of fact, I have nothing now except this house and plantation. I am ruined if the Abolitionists carry the country. That is what I intend to fight with all my might and main, abolition. Abolition would put us all in the almshouse in a jiffy ! "

Miss learns this sad news, too. All the fortune gone. Lost in speculation. Lost in Texas, Mexico.

" It is fortunate that we have your Uncle Steppleton's

fortune intact," says the husband to the wife. "Otherwise I should have small hopes of recuperating. The plantation reabsorbs all it makes."

Tirwell plans to go to New York with a large sum of money, there to make a fortune quickly in stocks and bonds. Incidentally he will study the mind of the financiers, the political leaders, and the influential men of the North. He will make speeches. He will write. Public opinion must be influenced to save the *status quo* of the country. Otherwise, ruin for all. Tirwell thinks the "Society" * will be an instrument for influence. Its activities must be revived.

Miss is dumb before the sweeping force of her husband. She cannot understand his mind. She cannot follow his reasoning. Instinct prompts her to withhold her private means from him. He has lost all his own. Is he likely to be any more fortunate with hers, more successful? The impetuous sweep of his eagerness, his hopefulness, his happy temper carry all before him. With her he is lover once more, husband and lord. Miss dare not risk his displeasure, a disappointment, another absence from home.

They will go to New York for the winter, Mr. and Mrs. Tirwell and the two older girls. Miss is appalled at the thought of the long journey; in the cars too. She has never travelled without her carriage before, the leisurely, dignified, old-fashioned mode of movement from place to place. And to reside in the great city so far away . . . for months in the arctic Northern winter! But the girls are eager for the trip. They join with their Pa in enthusiastic plans, brushing all objections out of the way.

"Why, what fear can you have of the cars, madam?" says Tirwell. "I have travelled in them for hundreds and hundreds of miles. Very fast and comfortable too.

*The "Know-Nothing" Society, somewhat similar to modern K.K.K.

We must bring you up to date. You are too old-fashioned."

"Yes, Miss, what could happen to us? Isn't Mr. Charles Langley an official of the road? We shall be as safe as we are at home." This, Miss Lotty.

To Miss the reasoning is not conclusive, but objections are useless. The trunks and the boxes are packed. The arrangements for the household, with Miss Macey and Mr. Menckel in charge, are made. Four Tirwells take the train to travel to New York.

CHAPTER XXIX

New York!

"Surely there is a fire, Sister. Did you ever see so many people all tearing along the streets of any town?"

Miss Belle and Miss Lotty lean over the balcony of their hotel. They gaze down on Broadway. Crowds and crowds of people, carriages of every description, horse-cars, wagons, carts. So much noise, such din and confusion.

"Then there must be a fire in every quarter of the town, for there is an equal number of persons all hurrying in every direction," says Miss Lotty.

Their Pa comes out on the balcony. "Are you ready, lassies? We are going for a drive in the streets."

Oh, joy! To drive about the avenues of New York. The young ladies hurry to get their wraps and muffs. Fine as the day is, it is winter and very cold in New York. Miss has a new plaid shawl. The girls have new bonnets tied with lavender ribbons. A carriage is waiting at the door, such an elegant equipage, very strong and light, not heavy and cumbersome like the old family coach at home. It is built low to the ground and

has only one step. The glass windows are polished bright. The occupants can see everything passing in the streets.

Thrilling to drive in New York. They proceed down Broadway. They see the fine churches . . . Trinity spire soaring away above everything . . . and Saint Paul's, where General Washington worshipped. . . . And here is Wall Street . . . Maiden Lane . . . Church Street . . . the Battery, with Castle Garden almost falling into the waters of the harbour.

"Mercy me!" exclaims Miss Lotty. "What a vast city! We have driven through many streets. They are all crowded."

"I wonder if anybody ever stops long enough to become acquainted with anybody else in New York?" says Miss Belle. "I am sure I should never be able to recognise a soul in all this throng."

"That's Castle Garden," points out their pa. "That's where the famous singer Jenny Lind drew crowds and crowds of people to her concerts."

"Is it possible that anybody has recognised us?" asks Miss in surprise. "Yet there is a gentleman waving to us from the sidewalk."

It is, indeed. Mr. Tirwell orders the driver to stop his horses. He throws open the door. It is young Edward Rayfield from Pine Grove.

"I recognised Miss Lotty's bonnet," he says, stepping into the carriage.

"Impossible, sir; it's a brand-new bonnet. You never saw it before."

"Well, it's the way you wear it!"

What fun he is! They all laugh.

"You must come with us to our hotel. We are just returning for supper, or dinner," says Tirwell. "What lucky chance threw you across our path? What brings you to New York?"

Whatever explanations or reasons Edward gives are inconsequential. Nobody listens. They are all talking too hard and too fast to stop to consider what any one says.

The carriage party returns to the hotel. Curiously enough, Edward Rayfield is staying at the same hotel. He is with friends, two young men. He brings them up to introduce them to the Tirwells. So gay, the large group of visitors from Virginia. The young gentlemen offer to escort the ladies about the town while Mr. Tirwell is engaged with his affairs of business. They know where all the best shops are located. They will be charmed to give all their time and attention to the ladies.

Happy days!

But the Tirwells do not remain above a month in the city. Miss is glad to return home. Her husband, to the utter amazement of everybody, makes several large sums of money in speculation. He pays his wife back all she has advanced him from her Uncle James Stepplеton's estate. Moreover, the "Society" advise their brilliant orator Robert Tirwell to repair to Washington to interview Congressmen, to speak for the cause at the various unofficial caucuses in the capital.

Edward Rayfield declares that if the Tirwells are leaving New York, his own road lies the same way. His travels in the North are ended. "I'm tired of Yankees, anyway," he says.

It is a joyful party that begins the return journey south. Tirwell keeps his family with him in Washington for several days, then he sends them on home under the escort of Edward Rayfield and his two friends. But the two friends leave the party at Fredericksburg. They go to Richmond, while Edward accompanies the Tirwells home to Waverley at Belair.

Edward is madly in love with Miss Lotty. His passion

keeps him awake at least an hour after retiring every night. But she is a flirt. She pretends greater favour toward his two friends, but when they, each separately and secretly, pay her court, she declares her heart is fixed elsewhere. The swains despair. How jealous they are of Rayfield, who is going to Belair, while they are ordered by their fathers to return home directly!

"You must come and visit us in our home," says Miss, as she bids them good-bye. "The cars will bring you almost to our very door."

"Indeed, we will, ma'am. We will come early in the summer."

After the young gentlemen are gone, Miss Lotty pretends to be desolate. She declares she is inconsolable. Nobody can comfort her. The sly puss! It is Edward Rayfield who is disconsolate. He is exceedingly jealous.

"Sister, how can you treat those young gentlemen so heartlessly?" says the gentle Belle. "You know you don't mean a word you say."

But Miss Lotty tosses her head and leads her remaining captive docilely by a metaphorical string. She does not even take it to heart when Miss scolds her for being pert. "What a coquette!" says her Pa, when he hears about the way she carries on. "You will break every male heart in Virginia."

Edward Rayfield's heart is already nailed up as a target for Lotty to shoot at.

CHAPTER XXX

In the summer Waverley is filled with company. The beautiful daughters of Mr. Robert Tirwell are known to the masculine youth of the neighbourhood and the State. There are gentlemen staying in the house. There are gentlemen staying at the Beech and Brook Hotel. There are gentlemen visiting in the vicinity. The Waverley parlour is crowded every afternoon and evening.

Tirwell is at home again. He is writing tracts and political pamphlets at a furious rate, locked up for hours and hours every day in his library. Now and then he rushes into the parlour, ruffles his hair, holds up the company, reads the latest paragraphs he has written. Are the gentlemen not convinced by the poignant logic? Are they not on fire with determination to combat Abolitionism in all its forms? They are. They agree absolutely with the master of Waverley, and Tirwell departs to his sanctum to finish the writing of pamphlet, newspaper article, or speech.

Dr. Tissert is rector of Belair Parish. He drives about in a buggy, a vehicle that is a sort of glorified gig, an emasculated carriage. Dr. Tissert gives small direction to his horse. Wherever the animal leads, there is the place the minister goes. It makes no difference. The whole neighbourhood and countryside is his cure and parish. He might as well be in one place as in another. The reins lie slack on the horse's back. Dr. Tissert jogs along murmuring to himself jeremiads and prophecies for his Sunday sermons. Sometimes he varies the exercise with Hebrew verbs, repeating Q'al, Hoph'al, Hithpa'el. Learned incantations. Dr. Tissert is very

wise. He is universally respected, by the old for his piety and wisdom, by the young for his mighty bristling beard flowing all over his bosom.

Dr. Tissert drives up to the door of Waverley. His nag halts. Dr. Tissert comes too. He alights. Laughter and music from the parlour. Gay Lotty is singing a song to an accompaniment on the pianoforte by Miss Belle. A company of young gentlemen listens in raptures, eyes fastened adoringly on the faces of the young ladies, particularly Miss Lotty.

" Dr. Tissert ! "

" Pray do not disturb yourselves ! How are you all. I came to see Mr. and Mrs. Tirwell," says the reverend gentleman, bowing to the company.

The music ceases. The gentlemen spring to their feet. The young ladies shake hands with the minister. Miss Belle leads him into the library, where her Pa and Ma are scanning accounts.

" Ah, Dr. Tissert, sir ! " Tirwell and Miss welcome their rector. " Pray be seated, sir. It is a long time since you favoured us at Waverley."

Dr. Tissert puts his high hat on the table. He is led to a comfortable chair. Mr. Tirwell offers him a cigar, but he prefers his plug tobacco.

" Belle, love," says Miss, " order some refreshment for Dr. Tissert directly . . . some of the pound cake . . ." and, turning to the guest, she asks : " Would you prefer a mint-julep, Dr. Tissert, or a glass of port wine ? "

" Julep, madam, a julep, if you please. This is hot weather."

The refreshments are brought. Two mint-juleps glistening with frost, a plate of rich cake, and Miss has a glass of sangaree. Miss Belle returns to the parlour. The playing and singing recommence in that apartment with spirit and brilliance, laughter.

" This is not fortuitous, accidental, my coming here

to-day," says Dr. Tissert. " I came on purpose. I wished to speak to you about some people staying at the Beech and Brook Hotel, people of refinement and charm. It is a doctor and his sister, Dr. Frederick Moomaw and Miss Katherine Moomaw. The lady is unwell. Her brother has brought her here from New Jersey, where I believe the country is very low and the winters severe. At Belair is combined both altitude and a mild climate, just what is needed for Miss Moomaw. They have been here ten days now. They are entirely unacquainted with any of the people of the vicinity. Dr. Moomaw did me the honour to call on me at the rectory. He asked me to visit his sister, whose spirits are low. I was charmed with them both. They are evidently gentlefolk, people of distinction and means. They have taken several rooms at the hotel, which they have fitted up with comfort and taste, even elegance and luxury. Miss Moomaw is not too ill to enjoy society. In fact, it would do her a world of good. It is distraction and entertainment she requires. I drove straight here to ask your good offices, my dear friends, for these lonely strangers. I trust you will call on them and pay them some attention."

The Tirwells are delighted at the thought of such cultured and charming people to add to their circle of acquaintances and friends. They lose no time in calling on the Moomaws at the Beech and Brook Hotel. They invite them to Waverley.

Dr. Moomaw is charming. Miss Moomaw is charming. Dr. Moomaw is devoted to whist. Miss Moomaw introduces croquet. She has, moreover, a pleasing voice and a repertory of French and Italian songs. She sings with the girls. She teaches Belle many beautiful and touching songs, and Lotty airs of sentiment and passion. The friendship ripens rapidly. All are delighted with one another.

Miss is constantly sending to Miss Moomaw delicacies

to tempt her appetite. Jellies, custards, light cakes, wines, whips, puddings. Twice or three times a week at the very least the Moomaws dine or sup at Waverley. And the ladies of Waverley go almost every day to visit Dr. and Miss Moomaw at the Beech and Brook Hotel.

If Miss Moomaw is singing with Lotty in the parlour, Miss Belle will take a hand at whist with her pa and ma and the doctor in the library. She plays with Dr. Moomaw. Sometimes, if Miss is too busy to sit down to cards, Miss Moomaw plays with Mr. Tirwell. The delightful days pass.

There are walks, too. The ladies are fond of strolling under the trees in the glades of the West Woods. Miss Moomaw is too delicate to go so far, but Miss Belle and Miss Lotty, with Dr. Moomaw and a train of gentlemen, take long walks there several times a week.

Dr. Moomaw is a botanist. He is teaching Miss Belle to know and analyze the flowers. He speaks to her of the art of landscape-gardening. And he talks to her of geography, geology, and mineralogy. He is so learned, yet so simple and delightful in the way in which he imparts his knowledge. A new world opens before the eyes of Belle Tirwell. Sometimes the conversation is about literature. The doctor is vastly read. He describes to her the opera in Paris and Vienna, in Milan and Dresden. Is there no end to his knowledge and experience?

Mr. Tirwell is equally charmed with the learned gentleman. Dr. Moomaw is well informed of all the current political and civic questions now exercising the country. He is an intimate friend of Mr. Edward Everett, of Massachusetts. He proposes a duel of letters on the subject of Abolitionism between the distinguished Northern savant and the well-known Southern orator.

" The exchange of ideas, the impact of personalities," says the Doctor, " will be advantageous to you in your propaganda. It will, moreover, convey your point of view directly to the North."

Dr. Moomaw introduces the gentlemen to one another by letter. A stimulating and spirited correspondence begins. At least once a month letters are exchanged between Mr. Everett and Mr. Tirwell. Mr. Tirwell is deeply indebted to his friend Dr. Moomaw for effecting the correspondence.

An early frost colours the trees in October. The woods are a blaze of colour, the far-off mountain-sides glow like tapestry with red and yellow and brown. This is the time of the most exhilarating walks in the West Woods. Every afternoon sees a gay party of strollers under the trees.

In the evenings there is music, conversation, cards, until the time of the handed supper, great waiters of sandwiches of the thinnest-sliced ham, rolled bread and butter, custards, jellies, fruits. The intimacy between the solitary guests at the hotel and the family at Waverley is faster than ever. Old friends, dear friends, delightful, entrancing new friends.

Dr. Moomaw seems very rich. His apartments are magnificently furnished. Miss Moomaw has a beautiful piano, imported from Baltimore for her. The shelves are filled with handsome books. Silk draperies adorn the windows and hang over the doors ; the ornaments and bric-à-brac litter the tables and desks in rich profusion. Dr. Moomaw wishes to secure a maid for his sister. He proposes to Mr. Tirwell the purchase of one of Prissy's daughters. At first Tirwell demurs. He dislikes selling his black people. But Young Prissy is eager to go. The transaction is effected. Then it transpires that the young woman's heart is engaged to a son of Taft and Judith. Nothing will do but that Dr. Moomaw

must buy Captain too. So kind! So generous! The Tirwells feel confident that the two young negroes will be happy and kindly treated by such good people as the Moomaws. The Doctor pays for them in hundred-dollar bills, one thousand dollars apiece.

Walking in the West Woods, Dr. Moomaw flips his cane about, stirring up the fallen leaves. Miss Belle leads her beautiful red setter on a leash. They are alone. Drs Moomaw is talking of travel abroad . . . of foreign capitals, London, Madrid, Brussels, Vienna. The sun sends slanting rays of red-gold light through the trees. The coloured leaves flutter down in a gentle shower of rustling beauty.

"How I should love to see those cities!" exclaims dear Belle. "But I never shall. We Virginian people are rooted to our plantations. We shall never be freed from our negroes."

"But why shouldn't you be free to travel and improve your mind?" asks Dr. Moomaw.

"Oh, no," says Belle, "we could never allow the Abolitionists to take away our black people. What would the poor things do without us to care for them and see that they pass peaceful, useful lives?"

"You mistake my meaning," answers her companion. "I was not thinking of Abolition. My thoughts were far more particular. I was thinking of you. Why should not *you* be free? Why should *you* not travel and see the world?"

"Oh, no; my Pa would never permit it."

"But if I should ask him." Dr. Moomaw stops still. He turns himself to face Belle. "What if I should ask him to permit you to go with me?"

"Even if he were willing for me to be away from home so long, your sister would never consent to jeopardise her health by travel."

"Again you misunderstand me!" exclaims the

Doctor. "My sister has nothing to do with it. I mean I wish you for my wife!"

Belle is astonished. She falls back a step, putting out her left hand to steady herself against the bole of an oak, her right clasping her heart. Never does she dream of Frederick Moomaw's caring for her. He is too great, too learned, too exalted, too much of the great world. She hides her passion for him within her heart. He must never know of the simple and devoted love of the daughter of a Virginian plantation. But what is this? A declaration? Poor Belle is sadly confused.

"True!" continues the Doctor. "I offer you my hand and my fortune. Will you consent to look favourably on my suit? Will you permit me to ask of your father your hand in marriage?"

Poor Belle does not know what to say. Never has she been so surprised in her life, nor so flooded with stifling joy. She cannot speak. With an effort she raises her eyes, filled with tears, to the face of the man she loves.

"Say yes, dear Belle!" cries he. "Allow me to call you my own!"

He holds out his hand. His arm steals about her waist. Belle yields herself to his embrace, hiding her blushing face against his shoulder, weeping for pure joy.

Will wonders never cease? Both Tirwell and Miss are surprised beyond measure to hear of the love-affair that has grown under their very noses. Consent is readily given to the match. Miss cries a little, secretly, in her chamber. To think that she has come to the marriage of a daughter! But Belle is full of an exalted happiness. She is wrapt in the clouds day and night.

The wedding is to be hurried up. Before Christmas. Miss Moomaw is so much better. Brother and sister and wife intend to travel abroad immediately, before the severest storms of the winter sweep over the ocean. All negotiations are complete. Belle is to be married in

her mother's wedding-dress; as for other clothes, Dr. Moomaw hoots at the idea of a wardrobe before they reach Paris. Everything shall be purchased there. Just the barest necessities now.

Mr. Tirwell, two days before the wedding, calls Dr. Moomaw into his office. He speaks of business, money, marriage settlements, *dot.* He turns over twenty thousand dollars as a portion for his daughter. He grasps the hand of his almost son-in-law. . . . "God bless you! God bless you both!"

The night before the wedding, Miss sits in the sewing-room. She is surrounded by piles of white garments, silks, muslins. The sewing women are gone. It is late. Miss picks up the renovated wedding dress, fingering the little satin bows, touching the ribbons. So long since the night at Belair Mansion when she did the same thing, the night before her own marriage. A slight rustle of skirts makes her look up.

"Belle, dearest, why are you not in bed?"

"Dear, dearest Miss," cries Belle. "I knew you were in here! Do let me sit here at your feet and talk to you awhile."

"Sit down, my darling." Miss strokes the loosened hair, smooths the glowing cheek of her daughter. "Are you happy, my dear, my baby? I tremble to think of your going so far away from us all, from your home."

"Oh, Miss, I am very, very happy!"

For a long time the mother and daughter sit thus, now silent, now whispering. The embers die in the fireplace. The December wind soughs strongly, but not unkindly, around the house. To-morrow is the wedding.

Dawn. Some one tapping on the chamber door. Tap, tap, tap.

Miss wakes. "Who is it?"

"Me, Miss, Judy."

Miss slips out of bed. Her husband is still sleeping.

The day is not yet come. The timepiece on the mantel says half-past four. Miss finds her wrapper and her slippers. She opens the door into the passage.

"What is wrong? Is any one ill?"

Judith's face is a puzzle. She seems both scared and hurt.

"Come out in de liberry, Miss. I done lit de fiar in dar. Hit's powerful cold hyar in de passage. Oh, Lordy, lordy, Miss, I'se got sumpin' turrible ter tell yu. I jes' had ter wake yu up, Miss."

Miss shuts the library door. The firelight plays brightly over the walls and the shelves of books, lighting up the bust of Bacon over the door and the bust of Shakespeare on the top of the secretary.

Judith is crying. "Oh, ma po' li'l' chile! Oh, ma po' li'l' Miss Belle! Hit's turrible, turrible!"

Miss's blood freezes in her veins. What can have happened?

"Tell me, Judith. Tell me quickly!"

"Hit's dat doctor, Miss. He's done gone. Hofficers done come an' took 'im an' his sister erway. Dat Rhœs done runned up here fas' es he kin run ter tell me, Miss.

Miss gasps with horror. "Tell me, tell me everything you know!"

"Rhœs say, Miss, Rhœs say, de Moomaws done got everything packed up ready ter go erway, kase dey's goin' on ercount er de weddin'. Atter supper de Captain come out an' tell Rhœs de Doctor is putting erway rolls an' rolls er money. He's burnin' it up!" Judith's eyes roll at the thought. Miss is utterly mystified. "Dey's two gen'elmen done come on de night train wes'. Dr. Moomaw, he sees 'em git offen de cyars. Right erway he begins burnin' up his money, rolls an' rolls er money. De two gen'elmen axes Mr. Buffard is dar er lady an' gen'elman stayin' at de hotel whar is named Scudgeon.

Mr. Buffard say ' 'tain't.' Den de gen'elmen picture de doctor an' his sister for Mr. Buffard. Rhœs hyeard de whole conversation through de bar-room do'. Mr. Buffard say dey is er lady an' gen'elman like dat stayin' in de hotel whar is name Moomaw. ' Deay is dem,' say de two gen'elmen. Mr. Buffard ax de gen'elmen don' dey wants ter go ter baid, kase hit's mighty late. De gen'elmen say what time do de night train goin' east come erlong, kase dey's gotter go ter Wynchville on her, an' dey's gotter see dese here Moomaws, or Scudgeons, fust."

Judith takes a long breath. Miss sits in petrifaction. What now? Judith continues:

"Yassam, dat's what Rhœs say. He hyeard hit every word. He say de gen'elmen asts Mr. Buffard whar is Dr. Moomaw's room. An' Mr. Buffard say he dassen wake up Dr. Moomaw, kase he sister's mighty perticular 'bout bein' woke up. She sick. Den Mr. Buffard say is dey business very pressin', an' dey 'low hit sho' is. So Mr. Buffard go knock on Moomaws' do.' 'Tain't nobody answer. Den de gen'elmen push pas' Mr. Buffard, dey do, an' dey rush right in Dr. Moomaw's room. Rhœs standin' dar. He seed 'em, Miss. Dr. Moomaw standin' in de flo'. He got er pistol in one han' an' he burnin' up money wid de other. But de gen'elmens ketch 'im so quick, he doan' hev no time ter shoot. Dey claps de irons on 'im. Den de lady, she runs out an' wants ter know what is de marter. Ain't neither un 'em been ter baid. Dey's dressed like dey wuz goin' erway quick. Rhœs say dar wuz er mighty fuss, sech hollerin', an' cryin', Miss. De gen'elmen tells Mr. Buffard dese people is some kind er somebody whar makes false money. Fuddermo', Miss Moomaw ain't de doctor's sister nohow. She ain't even his wife. He ain't got no wife. He done runned erway wid dis lady."

"Judith, I can hardly believe this story!" cries

Miss. "Is Rhœs outside? Bring him in to me directly. I must hear it from his own lips."

Judith goes to fetch Rhœs. Miss hastens to the chamber to wake her husband. In a few words she tells him all that Judith has told her. Tirwell is roused in a moment. He is shocked. He is furious. He tears on his clothes. He is going at once to the hotel to find out for himself all about this tragedy. He sticks his pistols in his pocket. He arms himself with a powerful horse-whip.

Miss pulls on some clothes, too. She wraps herself in a heavy cloak and shawl. She will come, too. Nothing shall prevent her. With Rhœs and Judith, they set out down the hill to the hotel.

Lights are burning. There is great confusion at the hotel. Mr. Buffard meets the Tirwells with a white face, a shocked and distressed countenance. It is all true. Never has he had such an astounding surprise. The Moomaws' rooms have been ransacked. Appliances for making counterfeit money have been found in one of the trunks—dies, stamps, models. The Moomaws, or Scudgeons, whoever they are, are gone. The federal officers have taken them away in irons.

Nothing to be done! The story is ended.

Robert and his wife creep back to Waverley. Dawn is come. How to break the news to Belle? No wedding! All, all lost, and romance is at an end. Miss rocks her child on her bosom all day, hour after hour, and far into the night. Shame and sorrow under the roof at Waverley.

Tirwell betakes himself to Washington to appear at the trial of the counterfeiters. He will try to recover the twenty thousand dollars he gave Moomaw as the marriage portion for his daughter. But the gold cannot be found. The whole tragedy is just as much mystery.

Shame and sorrow under the roof of Waverley. Poor Belle! Miss's heart bleeds for her daughter. Pa takes her away with him for a trip to New Orleans. Mardi

Gras. Diversion. Distraction. Travel. Until the pain eases. Poor Belle! Dear Belle! So hard to be brave! But what an escape for her! Captain and Young Prissy come back to Waverley. Tirwell burns up the false notes paid for them. There, at least, nothing is lost.

Poor Belle! Dear Belle! Life is very hard for her.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE Lester sisters are model young ladies. Too much so, perhaps. Excessive decorum freezes the chance of ardent attentions eventuating in desirable marriages. Young gentlemen are excessively polite to the Lester sisters, but they do not cultivate warm acquaintanceships at Bellevue.

"Born old maids," snorts Mrs. Leonard Hooper.

"I'm sure there's nothing improper nor disgraceful in that," retorts Miss Roxana Macey.

"True, my dear Miss Macey, but unfortunate. Don't you agree with me?"

"Not at all," says the spinster stiffly.

Miss is concerned about the lack of attention the Lester sisters receive from the masculine sex. "Why don't you invite the Lester girls to come over for the day and spend the evening?" she says when there is certainty of superfluity of company in the Tirwell parlour.

"Oh, Miss," protest her daughters in concert, "the Lesters do not care for beaux. They do very well when we have only ladies here. But when the parlour is full of gentlemen, one never knows when one of the Lesters will not be offended by some imagined liberty taken with her feelings. Oh, don't make us ask them to tea!"

Miss Dela Lester is prone to tears. From childhood she weeps on any and every provocation . . . if she

speaks an unwary word (seldom), if she trips her toe, if the weather is fair, if the weather is foul, if the night is dark, or the way rough, Dela Lester sheds tears. She is universally known as Sis, and the term connotes gloom and misery.

Judge Tony Lester is a very dragon for protecting his girls. Like a watch-dog, he barks and bellows if a guest, a male visitor, approaches the place. He suspects all, he trusts none. Mrs. Tony is no better. She finds some flaw, she picks some failing, in ever eligible young man she sees. The marriage chances of the Lester sisters are unlikely indeed.

Miss Lotty and Miss Martha Tirwell laugh at the poor things unmercifully. They prompt Mara to play practical jokes on them . . . hide Dela's handkerchief, fetch Lucy's Prayer Book to her in the midst of company, sew sonnets and verses in their bonnets, and plague the poor things unmercifully.

But never a Tirwell lacks for a beau. Like bees around honey the lovelorn swains invest the rooms and grounds of Waverley. Lotty has a scandalwood box full of notes and letters. "I should be quite bald if I gave every young gentleman who requests it a lock of my hair. What do the creatures want with my hair?" she exclaims naïvely.

Edward Rayfield is deeply in love. With sad and adoring eyes he follows every movement, every gesture Lotty makes. He sighs and sighs. He composes poems addressed to his mistress. He beseeches her favour whenever the least opportunity presents itself. Not often, for the coquettish girl takes the best of care to tantalise him. She rarely permits him to find her alone for a moment. Edward is desperately in love.

"Why don't you accept him, Lot?" inquires the practical Martha. "His manners and his dress are unimpeachable, his devotion utter."

"Pooh, there's time enough!" cries her sister irrelevantly.

"And he has such fashionable whiskers!" sighs Martha. "I wish he would come a-courting of me. I'd have him in a jiffy."

"You're welcome!" laughs the gay minx Lotty.

"But aren't you ever going to get married?"

"Girls, girls," admonishes Miss, "don't be so light. Martha, Lotty shall take her own time. She shall marry whom she chooses; that is, if your Pa and I approve."

"But don't you approve of Edward Rayfield, Miss?" asks Martha. "I am sure he is the most elegant of the young gentlemen who come to the house."

"Yes, I approve of him; not because he is elegant, but because he is the son of the Rayfields. They are the best of our Virginia stock."

Edward turns every stone to forward his suit. He speaks to Miss Lotty's Pa. He sues for the assistance of Miss Lotty's Ma. But they cannot help him without the co-operation of the lady herself.

"His very whiskers alone would engage my heart!" exclaims little Mara.

"Hush, child, what do you know about such things!" and Lotty dances gaily out of the room.

In the passage she meets Edward Rayfield himself, pacing back and forth, lost in gloomy thoughts and reveries. He seizes the accidental chance to speak to her.

"Please, please," he entreats, "will you marry me. How many times must I ask you that?"

"Pray, sir, run into the library and fetch me the volume I'm reading. It is on the secretary. *Cranford*."

Off races Rayfield, never suspecting the ruse to get rid of him. When he returns, Miss Lotty is sparkling with laughter and wit in company with two other callers who have been awaiting her in the parlour.

But in the pages of the book, Edward has hastily pencilled a note. " What can I do to prove my devotion ? Anything you ask."

Miss Lotty glances at the lines. Quick as a flash she scribbles a reply. " Cut off those terrible whiskers ! "

The young man's whiskers are the pride and joy of his heart, cut in the height of fashion. Monkey-chops, long and glossy. But no sacrifice is too great. The next day he appears (shamefacedly, perhaps) with his face smooth and clean, somewhat pale where the hair is shaved off.

" Oh, you dreadful young man ! " shrieks Miss Lotty. " Don't come near me until you have grown your whiskers again ! "

Was ever woman so perverse ? Miss hears the whole story. She rebukes Lotty sharply. " That was unkind of you. Such practical jokes are beyond the limits of charity. I am really displeased with you. If you do not intend to encourage Edward Rayfield, why do you not tell him so and send him away ? "

" 'Deed ma'am, I have done so repeatedly. I have tried to drive him away," protests Lotty. " He just won't budge."

Mara spies the shaven Edward. She hides herself behind the ice-house and there she weeps for his whiskers. The gentlemen twit Edward unmercifully on his gullibility. But Charles Rudd, his intimate friend, shaves off his beard, too. It puts Edward in countenance.

" That's very kind of you, Mr. Charles," says Miss. " I like you for it more than I have words to express."

" Lotty, I do declare, you'll be sure to die an old maid if you keep Edward off many more years," admonishes Martha.

Even Belle rebukes her coquettish sister. But Lotty gangs her ain gait. Nobody can pin her down. Yet Edward remains devoted. He never gives up hope.

CHAPTER XXXII

April, 1861, and up and down the land anxiety. Will Virginia join the seceding States? Will there be war? God forbid, God forbid! Mr. Lincoln's Proclamation for armies to quell the Southern rebellion is the last straw. The whole State of Virginia is inflamed. Never, never will soldiers raised on her soil invade her sister States who have left the Union.

The Convention sits in Richmond. What decision will the Convention make? That is the question every one is asking. Will there be war! Event after event, black war-cloud after black war-cloud, have rolled up before the eyes of the people, ever since John Brown's raid, and before. But will there be war? Must Virginia be drawn into the strife? Six Southern States, led by South Carolina on December 20th last, leave the Union. What will Virginia do? Why is Virginia so slow in deciding?

The Convention sits in Richmond. On April 17th, Mr. Lincoln's Proclamation is published. On the 19th, the Convention declares for war! But is it the will of the people? The Convention decides to put it to a popular vote on May 23rd. But how suicidal is delay. And hardly any militia in the country, a few volunteer companies here and there, and the State troops guarding the public property at Richmond. No proper preparations for defence or attack.

The immediate necessity, before the vote is taken, is to secure the workshops and arsenals. These the Convention orders seized. Harper's Ferry, Norfolk, one or two other points.

War!

Companies of men and boys drilling everywhere. Cadets from the V.M.I. at Lexington are distributed over the country to drill recruits. A training camp, called Camp Lee, is set up outside of Richmond. Major Jackson and his cadets are besought at every station, as they proceed from Lexington to Richmond, to allot a cadet as drillmaster for the eager volunteers.

The Confederacy is formed. Virginia at last is united with her sisters. The seat of the new government is removed from Montgomery to Richmond. Virginia's distinguished son, Robert Edward Lee, resigns his commission in the United States Army. He throws in his fortunes with his native land. He comes home to Virginia. He is made Commander-in-Chief of the Southern Armies.

War! War!

Young men joining the colours. Women, brave, courageous, hopeful, easing their anguished hearts in secret, smiling openly. Great days, stirring times!

The household at Waverley hear with horror of the first bloodshed. Union troops march across the Long Bridge at Washington. They enter Alexandria. On the Marshal House Hotel a Confederate flag is flying. The officer in command of the Zouaves, Colonel Ellsworth, declares his intention to pull it down. He enters the hotel, ascends the stairs to the roof, takes down the flag, and begins the descent to the street again. At the first landing he is met by the proprietor of the house, Mr. Jackson, excited, half-dressed, very angry at the invasion of his premises. "This is my trophy," says Colonel Ellsworth, holding up the flag. "And this is mine!" answers Jackson, firing a pistol ball into his breast. In another instant the brave man is pierced by the bayonets and bullets of Ellsworth's followers.

Bloodshed! War!

Edward Rayfield is going to the war! Lotty Tirwell

bursts into a storm of weeping. No need for him to cajole and beseech her favour now. She openly declares her devotion. They will be married at once. And Martha, too, to Charlie Rudd.

The court-house and the town hall at Belair are thrown open for workers. At the court-house, recruiting, speeches, shouting. Here Mrs. Tirwell and a corps of female assistants prepare food, dispense simple remedies and clothes to the companies as they are formed and march away. At the town hall, Belle Tirwell and Mrs. Leonard Hooper, with a staff of helpers, sew on garments and such things for the soldiers day and night.

In the afternoons, young ladies repair to the balconies of the Beech and Brook Hotel, there to greet the troop trains passing through. The hotel is draped with flags. The young ladies sing songs. They toss nosegays into the cars filled with soldiers. Hampers of food are emptied. Sandwiches, ham, fried chicken, beaten biscuits, cakes, what-not—everything possible for hungry men to eat.

"God bless the sweet ladies!" shout the soldiers. "Hurrah! Hurrah!"

In this galaxy of fair sympathisers at the railway, Martha and Mara Tirwell are prominent. The balcony is packed with young ladies waving flags, singing, dispensing delicacies. Mr. Andy Buffard gives free drinks to every officer. It is a strain on the hotel bar, but who can withhold anything from the brave men going to fight the invading enemy?

Lotty is preparing to be married at once; Martha at Christmas, for Charles Rudd is to take his degree in medicine at the University before he joins the army. Such love-letters as she receives! But Lotty is not separated from her lover. Edward Rayfield is stationed for the time being at Belair as recruiting sergeant. They are to be married the first of June.

Edward is teaching Lotty how to shoot a pistol. He sets up a bull's-eye on the lawn. Lotty trembles, but she puts on the boldest of faces and fires off her pistol again and again. Edward also gives her a sharp little dagger for the safeguarding of her honour and the protection of her person when he is not by to defend her.

Edward also offers to teach marksmanship to Miss Belle. But she is mortally afraid of the firearm. She can hit nothing because she will close her eyes every time she aims to shoot. It is dangerous. Once she breaks the glass in one of the green-house windows, firing wide, very wide, indeed, of the mark. She herself volunteers to end the lessons with the pistol.

Old as he is, Robert Tirwell is on fire with patriotic enthusiasm. He swears all day. He curses the " damned Yankees " . . . " hotel waiters, porters, riffraff, sent down here to kill the flower of our Southern manhood." Nothing will do but that he must volunteer. He will refuse to be rejected because of his years and the grayness of his temples.

June the first. Dr. Tissert stands before the fireplace in the parlour at Waverley. He wears his surplice and stole. In his hands he holds a monstrous Prayer Book. On each side of the room a large company is gathered, ladies, gentlemen ; the ladies in their finest and gayest dresses, the gentlemen in uniform or at least armed with a military belt.

Edward Rayfield stands with Charlie Rudd to the left of the minister. He is very calm and happy. His eyes gleam. He glances repeatedly toward the door. Charles Rudd is more nervous than the bridegroom. He cannot leave fingering the flaps of his pockets, the lapels of his coat, his fob, his seals, his handkerchief hanging out of his vest.

There is a hush. Nobody speaks. The chatter and laughter of a moment ago are silent. Mrs. Leonard

Hooper seats herself at the piano. She strikes up a march. In comes the procession before the bride. Miss Martha and Miss Mara Tirwell come first, dressed in pink organdie dresses. Then Miss Belle walks alone, head up, a heavenly smile lighting her beautiful and serene face. Lastly comes the lovely bride, blushing under her veil, leaning lightly on the arm of her Pa. Tirwell wears his new uniform for the first time.

Sis Lester breaks into sobs. And dear, good Cousin Roxy Macey weeps too, silently, quietly. But Miss stands upright not far from the spot where the marriage is to be performed. She smiles bravely, straightly, and proudly as a mother should who sees a daughter happily wed, and happily wed to such a brave and gallant officer as Edward Rayfield.

Dr. Tissert clears his throat. With his left hand he clears aside the dense hedges of his beard. "Dearly beloved, we are gathered together here in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony . . . I require and charge you both . . ."

Sis Lester weeps aloud. Miss freezes her with a look. Tony Lester rebukes her with a glance. But nothing can staunch the flow of tears. Lotty never heeds. She smiles.

"Those whom God hath joined together let no man put asunder."

Married! Lotty and Edward. The Rayfields and the Tirwells gather them into their arms. Kisses, blessings, good wishes. How radiantly happy they are!

The company distributes itself about the house and the grounds. Laughter. Music. Singing. And talk, war talk, war talk, perpetually. It is the absorbing single thought of the day and the times. Servants thread their way among the guests with waiters piled high with good things to eat. Madame Menricus will eat nothing but

ham sandwiches. She will drink nothing but whisky. Miss Flavia too.

Madame Menricus is gnarled and old, and her redoubtable daughter is not far behind her dam in hardened visage. They are leaving Belair to-night. The war-threatened country makes them long for Denmark and home again, though neither female has been in Copenhagen for over a score of years. Yet they are determined to cross the ocean. Their affairs are concluded. The Academy is closed. The Menricuses will go to Denmark without further parley or delay.

The wedding-guests finish the refreshments. They are gathered about in the passage and on the porch. In a moment the bride will come down the stairs, dressed for her journey. A half-moon hangs in the summer sky, looking in at the door through the fir trees in the circle of the driveway.

Madame Menricus claps her bony hands with great reverberations. "My friends!" she shouts. "My friends! Please give me your attentions. I have an important announcement to make." The old lady glares like an eagle at the company.

"Hear! Hear!" cry the gentlemen.

"My friends, ladies and gentlemen, I am burdened with the duty . . . and the pleasure . . . and I will say honour . . ."

"Hear! Hear!" shout the gentlemen.

". . . of announcing to you the termination of my happy career as mistress of your Academy for the children and young females of the neighbourhood. This is already well known to you. But . . . but I have not yet divulged the name of my successor." Madame Menricus looks about the faces gathered around her. "Where is that Herr Menckel?" she vociferates. "Herr Menckel!" she thunders. "Herr Menckel will succeed me as master of Belair Academy. But he will not be

alone, my friends, he will not be alone." Madame Menricus regards her auditors more sternly than ever. "He will be married, my friends. Yes, married."

"Hear! Hear!" repeat the gentlemen. The ladies begin to titter and flutter.

"Where are these people?" inquires the stalwart Dane. "Flavia, order out Menckel and the Macey woman directly."

But the elderly lovers are not to be found. They are hid.

But here comes the bride. She enters the carriage. The bridegroom takes his seat beside her. Taft whips up the horses. Off to the railway station they go. Most of the company follow on foot. A short distance across the lawn, through the meadow and down the hill to the station.

"God bless and keep you safely, safely," says Miss, folding her daughter in her arms.

The whistle of the engine blows. The train arrives. The bride and groom clamber up the steps of the car. Several of the party are going, too. There is a muster at Wynchville. There Edward will join his regiment and Mr. Tirwell, and several other volunteers from Belair.

The ladies crowd out on the balcony of the hotel to see the train depart. Flowers and rice are flung in profusion. Lotty Rayfield waves gaily from the window of the car. Edward smiles over her shoulder. The train begins to move.

"Good-bye! Good-bye!"

The train begins to move. Windows of the cars full of faces looking out, hands fluttering handkerchiefs. The crowd on the balcony of the hotel presses forward, straining to see the cars pass by.

The train begins to move, and so does the balcony. It is falling down. The ladies scream. There is a rush of gentlemen to the rescue. Leaping upon one another's

shoulders, they support the sagging balcony until the fair burden of ladies upon it can scramble through the windows to safety within the parlours of the hotel.

Night at Waverley. War in Virginia.

Miss kneels beside her own little chest of drawers, her child's wedding-veil in one clasped hand, her husband's civilian's coat in the other.

"O God, O God, be good to my dear ones!" All night long: "O God, O God, be good to my dear ones."

CHAPTER XXXIII

A LETTER from the bride. Miss reads:

"We arrived at our dear friends' home without adventure. The train was two hours late, owing to two troop-trains ahead of us. The Langleys are hospitality itself. Edward and I are very happy. As I have assured myself again and again, why did I delay so long in bringing about this blissful state of affairs? Edward thinks so, too, but the generous fellow does not reproach me.

"Wynchville is full of soldiers. The streets swarm with them. There is a large camp outside the town. By special permission of the commanding officer, Edward is not obliged to live at the camp (as we had at first feared he would have to do), but when the special exigencies of the case were presented to Colonel A——, permission was granted to us to be together until Edward's detachment is ordered away. Colonel Langley says that many of the officers take their wives with them to camp. Edward does not wish me to undergo the hardship of camp life, but I am determined to go if it is humanly possible.

"There is company every evening at the Langleys'. Officers and their wives, sweethearts, and mothers. The supper-table is crowded with guests. The talk is, of course, solely about the war. All are of the opinion that it cannot last long. Those miserable hired Yankees will never be a match for our brave Southern men who are fighting for the protection of their firesides and families. Oh, why must the peace and beauty of our dear land be scarred and harried by an invader!

"Yesterday we drove out to the camp to watch the drilling. The soldiers had their new uniforms. It was an

inspiring sight to see the brave fellows marching and counter-marching at the word of command. When the colours, our own new Confederate colours, were carried by, I burst into tears, saturating both my own handkerchief and Miss Kitty's. The camp seemed so orderly with rows and rows of tents. The smoke of the camp-fires rose up straight into the pure air, and I could smell the odour of the suppers cooking. When the parade was over, Colonel A—— came up with Edward and was introduced to the ladies. He is a fine, handsome man, resplendent in his gray uniform and insignia. He escorted a party of the ladies down several alleys of the camp. We saw the extreme neatness of the tents, each with its door-flap pinned back, and the occupants inside busied with cleaning their arms, or setting things to rights after their drill. Colonel A—— invited us to stay for supper. I should dearly have loved to do so in order to taste the experience of real camp life, but Miss Kitty said we could not possibly stay, as there would be a party for supper and dancing at their house. So we reluctantly bade our gallant host farewell and returned to Wynchville.

"One hears such conflicting reports of what is going on in the northern part of the State, where the fighting is. To-day we heard there had been an engagement between our troops and the enemy in which there was much bloodshed on the other side, many prisoners captured, and the miserable Yankees wholly routed. Later this report was reversed. All our former rejoicing was converted into the deepest gloom. Now, *mirabile dictu*, the latest bulletin says there never was any engagement at all! What is one to believe?

"I heard to-day the story of a Captain Brown, a veteran of seventy years old, who gave the order to his men to fire on the enemy in this fashion: 'Steady! Aim! (God have mercy on their souls!) Fire!'

" Colonel Langley and his sister, Miss Kitty, send you their devoted greetings. My husband and I embrace you, dearest, dearest Miss. Pa left to-day for Culpepper Court-House."

Miss closes the sheet of paper. War ! War ! She lifts her hand to brush the tears from her eyes. Then she smiles, straightens her shoulders, and marches out to the back yard.

" Remus, take down half the hams in the smoke-house. Pack them in bags. And order one of the men to take a team to carry the meat to the camp at Wynch-ville."

Aunt Christian sits in a split-bottomed chair in her cabin door. She is house-ridden with rheumatism and years. As her mistress passes by, old Christian hails her.

" Mornin', Miss," she says. " Dat yaller woman tryin' ter cook fer yo'-all ain't sarnt me my fried chicken an' fritters like yo'-all tole 'er ter do. An, dat Toby ain't brung me no wood fer mer fire, nor fil' ma water-bucket terday nuther."

Miss stops to hear the complaints.

" How are you to-day, Aunt Christian ? It is a shame for the people in the kitchen to neglect you the way they do. I shall certainly speak to them about it."

" Ef Ah jes' could git me outen dis chair, Ah'd git back in dat kitchen, an' Ah'd show dem niggers what er real cook is ! "

Miss sits down on the doorstep for a moment's chat with the faithful old woman.

" How is de war, Miss ? " Aunt Christian is garrulous. " Ain't dem Yankees done gone back home yit ? Dat uppity Young Prissy come in hyar an' tole me dat we'se all gonner be free. De Yankees goin' ter set us black folks free. Hit made me dat mad, Miss, Ah could-a hit the gal wid ma stick, 'deed Ah could. ' Free,' Ah says, ' free ! Who wanter be free when dey's got de

kindest white folks in de whole worl' ter look arter 'em. What would Ah do ef Ah was free, tied hyar ter ma cheer, can't scarcely move hand er foot? Ef Ah wuz free, who would care 'bout po' ole Christian? Who give yu er home an' vitals an' all de things yu needs, ef hit ain't de white folks? Ef yu free, whar yu gwine git yo' livin'? ' 'Deed, dat's jes, what Ah tole her, Miss."

"Don't you worry, Christian. You will always be taken care of."

On the afternoon of July 21st, the bell of Saint Matthew's church begins to toll. All Belair runs together to the court-house to hear the news. Miss snatches up her bonnet. She runs as fast as she can go toward the street. She meets Mrs. Hooper and Mrs. Menckel emerging from the Academy gate. They run together toward the court-house.

Extraordinary news! A great battle is in progress at Bull Run, near Manassas Junction. The telegrams say there is great slaughter. General McDowell, the Federal commander, seems to be gaining a decisive victory. The faces of all gathered before the bulletin board are heavy with foreboding and gloom. The church bell is tolling. Dr. Tissert clambers up the steps of the court-house portico. He looks like one of the old Hebrew prophets, or one of the patriarchs, as he stands there, hat off, hands upraised, the summer wind just stirring the meshes of his beard.

"My dear friends," he shouts, "this is a most solemn moment. Our men are engaged in battle with the enemy. God give victory to the cause of justice and right. But we must remember that this hour many human souls are passing on to God, to stand before the heavenly judgment seat. I have ordered the church bell tolled for the dying. I now bid you fall to prayer. As many as can, follow me to the church where we can watch and pray. Come!"

Dr. Tissert repeats the Lord's Prayer in a loud voice. The sobbing voices of the people follow him in every petition. Then he begins the One Hundred and Thirtieth Psalm. "Out of the deep have I called unto thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice."

The venerable clergyman leads the way to the church. A concourse of people follows him thence. They enter the sacred building. Led by Dr. Tissert, whose voice grows stronger and stronger, the gathering of old men and women prays. "O God the Father of Heaven; have mercy upon us miserable sinners."

Sunset, and the coming of the dark. A great shouting arising near the station. Again a concourse of people swarms to hear the news.

Victory! A great victory at Bull Run. The Federalists routed! No more than that, but it is enough. People embrace one another and weep and laugh. Bonfires are lighted in the streets. The church bells ring and ring, peal after peal, hour after hour. There is little sleep in Belair that night.

A letter from Mr. Tirwell to his wife:

"On July 19th I moved in General Beauregard's army to Manassas. We expected fighting. General McDowell was approaching. The eagerness of our men for the battle was magnificent. I never saw greater courage. Yesterday the fighting began. It was very heavy. There were fifteen thousand Confederates opposed to nineteen thousand Yankees. In the afternoon it looked as though the tide was going against us. But just when McDowell seemed on the point of victory, a fresh detachment of Southerners under General Kirby Smith arrived on the scene and turned the scale. We scored a great victory, but at the cost of a holocaust of five thousand men killed. The Northerners have been expecting and preparing for this engagement for weeks. They expected

to crush us at the first blow. But now they realise that it cannot be so easily accomplished. The Major Jackson, now General, who was professor at the V.M.I., covered himself with glory. Just when the action seemed going against us, General Bee said to him in despairing tones: 'General, they are beating us back.' 'Then,' replied the General, 'we will give them the bayonet.' This greatly enheartened General Bee. He hastened back to his dispirited men, exclaiming, 'There is Jackson standing like a stone wall. Rally behind the Virginians.' A bayonet charge was made, before which the enemy recoiled and fled. General Jackson has now been fittingly promoted and given a new command in the Valley of the Shenandoah.

"I pen these lines to you in my tent. All is confusion here after the battle. But I knew how anxious you would be, so I hastened to assure you of my personal safety, and at the same time chronicle a brief account of our great victory. It is a thousand pities that our men were too exhausted to follow out their advantage. The enemy was routed. We could have pursued them. We could have captured Washington!"

This letter Miss carries the round of her friends . . . Mrs. Hooper, the elderly bride, Mrs. Menckel, Mrs. Bassett, and others. It is the first personal news of the battle anybody in Belair has. Dr. Tissert reads some of it out from the pulpit on Sunday, and later offers thanks to God for victory.

The summer of 1861 drags slowly by. War! The whole land groans with strife and hate. War! Horrible civil war!

CHAPTER XXXIV

MARTHA TIRWELL is in tears. Her wedding is postponed. Charlie Rudd is ordered south, to Georgia. It is inadvisable to be married just now. All day long, for days and days, Martha goes about the house weeping.

"Be brave, my daughter," comforts Miss. "Charlie will come back to you. He is not fighting. He is quite safe in his hospital work, a noble labour of self-sacrifice and love. We must sacrifice everything for our cause. If Charlie knew you were so distressed how it would wring his heart! His own disappointment and separation from you are trials hard enough for him to bear."

But Martha cannot dry her eyes. The springs of a passionate grief will overflow. Her sister Mara tries her hand.

"This is a good time, dear," she says, "to furbish up this old-fashioned house. Everything is hopelessly antique. Look at those monstrous beds, like great wagons . . . and the stiff sofas and chairs. Come, we'll make everything as near the French style as possible."

Miss is too concerned with the management of the plantation, her housekeeping, her charitable work for the soldiers, and her own heavy thoughts, to put any obstacles in the way of the girls doing what they like.

"Only the furniture in the chamber you must not touch," she says, when she comes on Godfrey under the direction and captaincy of Martha and Mara sawing off the legs of the high four-posters, cutting down the tester-posts. "I wish everything in the chamber to remain as it is. That furniture is hallowed by the use of generations of your ancestors. You must leave something to remind us of the past. I am very old-fashioned.

There is too much change going on all around us for me to alter wilfully what is most familiar and dear to me in my own room."

"What!" cries the lightsome Mara, "do you still want to climb into bed by a pair of steps, like scaling a roof? Miss, dear, you are truly an old Miss."

"Then Old Miss let me be," declares Mrs. Tirwell.

So the girls in fun add the adjective to their affectionate name for their Ma. "Old Miss" she is henceforth. As the children caught the title from the servants, so the servants catch the new name from the daughters. So Miss becomes Old Miss, a term of endearment in the mouth of the girls, one of respect and veneration to the black people.

"At least let us hang an antimacassar on the mantelpiece in the chamber," they beg. "And won't you please use the kerosene lamps instead of those old lard affairs and the candles?"

Old Miss laughs. "Have it that way then," she says, and goes about her affairs.

Martha and Mara beguile the days with alterations of the furniture in what they fondly conceive to be the latest French fashions. Miss Belle gives them hints of how to proceed based on what she observed in the homes of the French people in New Orleans upon the occasion, several years ago, when she and her Pa made a trip to that famous French city.

Lambrequins, antimacassars, covers brighten up the sombre horsehair upholstery and threadbare brocade of the chairs and sofas, all garnished with bows of ribbon. Knick-knacks bedeck the mantelpieces. Gilded pine cones, frosted grasses in china vases. A multitude of obsolete articles is removed to the attic . . . a spinning wheel, a Sheraton sideboard, two pairs of leather bellows, and their mother's old harp.

"Lotty won't know the place," the girls declare,

" when she comes home for a visit. Aren't we fine, though ! "

Belair is filled with refugees from Lower Virginia, principally Norfolk. There is a family of Wileys, delightful people, a mother and two daughters nearly grown, and two little nephews. They are people of means and refinement, now reduced to the direst poverty by the pressure of the war. They live in a small house on Main Street. The Tirwells are delighted to make such pleasant friends.

Waverley is filled with guests. Aunt Martha Twitchell is here. She is an old lady now, very, very stout, with a palsied head, and nearly blind. Uncle Harvey is dead. The boys are in the army, the girls all married. The family barouche performs its last act in bringing Mrs. Twitchell from Pine Grove to Waverley. It collapses upon arrival, so completely as to be beyond repair, even unworthy of housing in the barn. The faithful vehicle rusts in the air and the rain, abandoned in the back of the stable-yard.

" It has served my day," comments Aunt Twitchell. " I have ever eschewed the cars. I pray Providence here to die."

" Nonsense, Aunt Harvey," cries Old Miss. " When the war is over, you'll get a new carriage and travel many a mile in it with your children and grandchildren."

" Ah, me," sighs the old lady, unconvinced.

Miss Kitty Langley is at Waverley too, and her sister-in-law, Colonel Charles's wife, with her two children. The Langley home in Wynchville is closed because all the menfolks are in the army and Wynchville is a possible danger spot for fighting.

The South is beginning to feel the pinch of the Yankee blockade. No manufactures come through. No delicacies for the kitchen or the table. Housewives begin to hoard

sugar, coffee, whisky, spice. Old garments are turned and re-turned, everything wearable is made over if salvage and use are possible. All available produce from the land is sent immediately to the army. Corn, wheat, pork, beef, potatoes, what-not, every edible thing.

Old Miss groans within her soul. How long will the strain last ?—for ever ? Oh, this frightful war !

CHAPTER XXXV

How time drags, and the war ! Frightful stories of Yankee atrocities. The iniquitous Sherman in Georgia harries the land. And the creature the people of New Orleans dub " Beast " Butler. In Virginia, as elsewhere, the brilliant Confederate victories cannot outweigh the slow pressure from the ever-recruited Northern armies . . . and the closer and closer drawing of the blockade along the coast.

Gettysburg ! A Southern rout ! A Federal triumph ! The Southerners, half-clothed, half-starved, fight with a determined desperation. Stonewall Jackson is dead. Jeb Stuart. Mourning and courage walk hand in hand in the Confederacy.

Lotty Rayfield comes home. She is expecting to be a mother. Edward will not permit her to remain a day longer with him in camp. She tells the most amusing stories of camp life. Her sense of humour cloaks the grim tragedy of reality.

" Once we had a general to dinner," she relates. " I had a black savage for cook. We expected to be extra fine for that dinner . . . corn-pone, boiled cabbage (a great delicacy, I assure you, my dears), sweet potatoes, and, as a grand climax, a pie. The dinner went off with the greatest éclat. The corn-pone was delicious ! The

general was in the mellowest of moods. Our plates (the general had a china one, what matter if it was cracked and nicked ?) were removed. We settled ourselves for the pie. We waited and waited. I exercised every faculty to keep the general amused. Where could be Zack and the pie ? At last I excused myself in order to investigate the fate of the pie. No pie ! No Zack ! And that's the end of the tale. We never saw either pie or Zack again. Don't ask me what became of them. Anything can happen in camp."

A young officer riding into the Waverley grounds. It is young Harvey Twitchell. He is threadbare, but gay. He comes a long way, and his mount is covered with mud and very tired.

" Why, Harvey ! " cries Old Miss. " I should never have known you ; you have grown to a man since I saw you years ago. And how well you look as a soldier ! "

Harvey comes to warn the countryside as far as Wynchville of the chance of a Yankee raid. General Hunter is moving down the Valley. He may come through the pass between the Peaks, instead of where the James River breaks through the mountains, in order to fall on General Early at Wynchville.

Harvey will stay the night, not longer. He must ride on quickly toward Wynchville, warning the farmsteads and plantations all along the way.

The ladies are charmed to have a soldier in the house. They cannot do enough for him. The fat of the larder is set before him. The best bed is at his disposal : a bed, clean sheets, what luxury ! He must have a hot bath, clean linen, his uniform patched and mended. Godfrey is told off to wait on him. Judith produces buttons, patches, a new pair of homespun socks. Harvey's boots are taken to the cobbler's for instant attention.

In a suit of his cousin Robert Tirwell's, much, much too large, and a pair of mighty slippers, Harvey Twitchell

sits in the library recounting tales of valour. The ladies hang on his words.

"Now, Ma, you mustn't cry so much," says Harvey to his mother. "I'm a lot better off than most of the poor fellows."

But Aunt Harvey only moans the louder. "That I should live to see this day!"

"Well, what's the matter with the day?" gibes Harvey. "Ain't this good weather? Ain't I well and come to see you?"

A black boy, with an immense grin, comes in with a real mint julep. The very last of the whisky and the sugar. Maria appears with a plate of fresh cake. Young Prissy has a basket of apples. Everything for the soldier. Cousin Martha Tirwell darns the blouse of the uniform. Old Miss knits frantically on a new pair of socks in order that Harvey may have a change to slip in his knapsack. Mara is polishing his sword and his spurs.

"Is it possible that the Yankees will dare to come here to our very doors?" cries Old Miss. "Is it possible that we shall have a raid?"

"Very likely, Cousin," answers Harvey. "Better bury your silver and hide all your valuables. You won't have a thing if the Yankees get their hands on them. It is just possible that 'Jubilee' Early will get here first and prevent Hunter crossing the mountains. But don't count on that. Take every precaution."

In the morning Harvey is refurbished. He is as fine as a cock. Dressed and refreshed, he comes downstairs early. He saunters about the grounds. Some one singing in the garden. Maria gathering roses. Harvey runs to join her.

"Here, let me hold your basket. Let me cut the thorny things. You'll tear your hands all to pieces. Nothing short of ploughshares could scratch my tough skin."

"Well, can you cut me that pink bud high up yonder?"

Harvey leaps for it. He cuts it down. He delivers it to the sweet girl, his cousin. Mara clasps the shell-like blossom in her hands. She inhales its fragrance, furtively placing it to her lips. Then she pins it to the breast of her second cousin.

"There, sir, how fine you are!"

Harvey smiles down at the rosebud, then at the slip of a girl. How pretty she is, how graceful, how young! Just sixteen, not quite, or a little more?

"I'll keep this rose," he says. Something vital springs between them. They are suddenly quite self-conscious. Mara wishes to hide herself. She wishes to run away. Her cousin is looking at her. She blushes quickly, then goes pale.

"Must you leave Waverley to-day, Harvey?"

"I'll be sure to come back."

"Breakfast, breakfast!" calls Belle from the dining-room window. "Oh, what a lot of lovely roses! That's the prettiest of all, Harvey, that bud on your coat."

Now Harvey turns red. "Cousin Mara pinned it there," he says.

All the family are down for breakfast, even the children, even Harvey's Ma, who seldom leaves her chamber before twelve o'clock in the day. The assemblage is in honour of the soldier about to ride away on an errand of honour and duty.

Harvey is ready to leave. His horse, newly curried and fed, is at the door. Harvey is kissing his Ma good-bye. Hands are held out to him on every side. Perhaps he will be back in a day or two. Good-bye, good-bye!

"But where is Mara?" asks Belle. "Doesn't she know her cousin is leaving now?"

"She cannot bear to say farewell," says Miss Kitty

Langley, who has just seen Mara wiping her eyes behind the parlour door. " She's such a child."

Harvey mounts. He rides around the circle, away toward the gate along the serpentine drive. The Waverley household, cousins and friends, wave to him from the plazza. He turns the bend by the high syringa bush. Out of sight of the house.

At the big gate, Mara is pressed up against one of the posts. Tears shining in her eyes, but a brave and glorious smile on her lips.

" Good-bye," she says.

Young Harvey leans over from his saddle. " I love you. I love you," he says passionately. His arm sweeps her to him. Their lips meet. Love is quick in time of war. " I love you most dearly."

" Cousin, cousin ! " gasps the girl. " *I* love *you*."

" Good-bye ! "

" Good-bye ! "

Mara runs to the house as fast as her slippered feet can take her. Miss is in the chamber. She sits in her wide arm-rocking-chair. She is reading her Bible for the day, a daily morning devotion. Mara slips to her knees at her mother's side. She buries her head, weeping, weeping.

" My dear, my dear," soothes Miss. " Child, child ! "

" I'm not weeping for sorrow, Old Miss. I'm weeping for joy. I'm engaged to my cousin Harvey ! " And every detail of the lightning courtship Mara pours into her mother's astonished ears. " Say you bless me, dearest, dearest Old Miss ? "

Love is quick and hot in time of war.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Old Miss prepares to meet Hunter's raid. She collects all the silver in the house. She buries it in sacks of corn meal. From her desk she extracts a strong-box of money, gold and silver coins, about three thousand dollars, which she wraps in a truss of hay. Jewellery and other valuables are hid in the cushions of the family carriage. Taft brings out the fine carriage horses, two of them, all that are left of the stables since the men took the riding horses to war with them. The huge family coach is hitched up. Taft and Remus mount the box. Off they drive. Both men are well aware of the load they are carrying. They are proud of the trust reposed in them. Off they go to Franklin County, far out of range of the marauding Yankees.

The house is got to rights. Miss is upstairs and downstairs, back and forth all day long. Linen is hid under the carpets. Fine china and glass are stowed away as inconspicuously as possible. Lotty Rayfield lays her pistol and her dagger on her bureau. Of which is she least afraid?

Martha and Mara suggest that abundant lunches be prepared against the arrival of the enemy. Kindness and hospitality may soften hard hearts, even the iron hearts of Yankees. The oven is filled with baking bread, the spits are loaded with chickens, and the hams are cooking.

But how soon will the raid come? What day, what hour may the vandals be expected?

The day after Harvey Twitchell leaves, another rider comes with the news that Hunter's army is in Botetourt County. They harry the land. Not a blade of grass

escapes them ; everything edible, everything burnable falls under their destructive fury. The rider surmises two days, possibly three, before the enemy crosses the mountains.

Then other warnings come. Old men riding on nags, winded and pitiful animals. Lads, scarcely in their teens, mounted on ancient mules. Two, three days pass. The enemy crosses the mountains by the pass between the Peaks. Early in the morning the word comes to Belair. The dreaded raid will descend upon the village at noon, or very early in the afternoon.

" Prepare for anything," says Old Miss. " Let us dress ourselves completely in case we have to leave the house. They may burn Waverley. Other estates, as fine and finer, have not escaped the flames. Let us each pack a small handbag of the most necessary things to carry with us if we have to flee."

The cellar under the library is arranged as a refuge. Rugs, chairs, tables, and a sofa. Food is carried down there and hidden under some boards. At the woodpile stands Godfrey sharpening his axe. Grinding, grinding. The sound of the revolving whetstone makes a curious sharp sound. Godfrey puts a razor-like edge on the axe.

In the pantry, on the back porch, Martha and Mara, assisted by any number of helpers, manufacture mountains of sandwiches, cut piles of bread. There is no butter. Dry bread and ham. Fried chicken. The coffee pots, cauldrons simmer by the kitchen hearth.

Noon. The ladies dress and seat themselves in the end-passage to await the coming of the enemy. At two o'clock Judith and Maria hand them food, a light lunch. Why do not the Yankees come ? The suspense is hard to endure.

" How do you feel, Lotty, dear ? " asks Old Miss. Old Miss is apprehensive of what may happen to her

daughter. Excitement might bring on her pains. Yet she has three months to go before normal confinement.

"Very well, thank you," answers Lotty. "Isn't it close in here! Couldn't we just open the shutters a very little, and the doors?"

But Old Miss forbids. The house is locked and sealed from top to bottom. It is very dark indoors. Lotty sighs and fans herself with a large palm-leaf fan.

"Don't you think we had better repair to the cellar?" asks Miss Kitty Langley. "Make Godfrey come in to guard the house."

Two o'clock. No raid yet. A negro youth creeps up from the orchard. He brings news. He runs for miles ahead of the advancing army.

"Dey done crossed de mountains. Dey's er-marchin' in de road. Dey ain't stoppin' nowhar, an' dey ain't botherin' nuthin'."

Then they may be expected soon! The messenger goes on to the village, and beyond. Belair is like a dead place. Not a soul on the streets. The houses shuttered and closed. The fowls shut up in their hen-coops. Stray mongrels slinking around corners, and cats.

Who is knocking at the end-door of Waverley? Mrs. Menckel! She, too, is dressed as for a journey. Hot as the weather is, she wears four shawls and three pairs of gloves. Her fingers stick out thick and helpless.

"Roxy," cries Old Miss, "what possessed you to venture out?"

"I just had to come to see how you all did. Menckel has his German uniform on, his passports in his pocket. We have hidden all the girls in the attic of the Academy. I came by the rectory on my way. Dr. Tissert heard this morning of the death of his eldest son. Killed."

Mrs. Menckel breaks into tears. War takes a heavy toll.

"I must go now," she continues. "I want to go to Mrs. Hooper's."

"Anything is preferable to this suspense," declares Martha. "It is as still as death, and as peaceful. I do not believe the Yankees are within miles of us. Surely we should hear the drums or the fifes! I think I will just run across the road with Coz Roxy to see how the Hoopers do."

"Pray, daughter, do nothing so foolish. I wish Roxy would go straight home," remonstrates Old Miss. She is vastly uneasy, nervous.

But Miss Martha is restless. She makes some excuses.

"At the first hint of the approach of the enemy, I'll just dash home again," she says.

Three o'clock; four o'clock; no raid yet!

Martha rushes in at the back door.

"They are here! They are here!" she cries. She is trembling. She is out of breath. "I was almost run over by the head of the column as I ran across the road."

True; the enemy is come! Without noise or confusion the grounds fill with soldiers. Sharp words of command. The companies disband. The fences are quickly pulled down for fires. Tents are pitched in a jiffy of time. The soldiers swarm over everything. The hen-houses are broken open. Every fowl is killed. The ice-house is emptied, the garden rifled. Men come to the house. The ladies, dressed in their best, hasten to hand out the lunches. How humorous! The men laugh and crowd up to the doors.

"Ladies, is this a hotel?" some wag inquires.

"No, this is our beloved home," replies Old Miss sternly.

Old Miss stands on the sill of the back door. The sight of the instant devastation tears her heart. She sees her two cows butchered before her eyes, her garden denuded, all the fences torn down, the place stripped. The black people cower in a frightened crowd in the kitchen.

"Come out of that and get busy, you niggers!" shout the soldiers. The poor things are pressed into all manner of service.

"Is dat freedom?" snorts Judith, standing stiff and solemn and wrathful beside Mrs. Twitchell's chair.

Evening. The sun sets red behind low black clouds. Rain to-morrow. Soldiers all over the town. Fires glowing brightly in every pasture and yard. Here Hunter's army camps for the night. At dark, flames leap up from the railway station, the town hall, the court-house. Some barns are burning, some stores on the street.

An officer rides up to the door at Waverley. He takes off his cap to Old Miss and the ladies. "May I inquire who owns this handsome place?" he says.

"I do," answers Old Miss proudly. "I trust, sir, that you will spare me my home, the only shelter I have for myself and my daughters."

"Madam, this house will be the headquarters of General Hunter when we return from the destruction of Early's ragamuffins."

Old Miss turns her back and stalks into the library.

All night the soldiers camp about the place. No one lies down, save Aunt Harvey. Judith and Maria and the two Prissies, mother and daughter, remain with the ladies in the passage. In the library Godfrey watches with his axe across his shoulder.

Daylight. The black people crowd around the back door. Old Miss stands on the sill.

"If you want to go away," she says, "you may. You are free now. The soldiers told you so last night. See, they are preparing to march on. All of you are free to go, too."

A wail like a moan sets up from the poor negroes.

"Yu ain't sendin' us erway, is yu, Old Miss? Whar we gwine ter go? We belongs ter yu, Old Miss. We

don' wanter belong ter nobody else. We don' wanter be free."

"God bless you! God bless you!" says Old Miss, breaking into tears.

By sunrise the raiders are gone. But what a scene of desolation is left behind! No enclosures as far as the eye can reach, smouldering camp-fires, trampled lawns and gardens, litter of every sort everywhere. The hot sun beats down on the ruin.

Evening again, and the sound of distant firing. Nearer, nearer. Fighting. Hunter and Early in conflict. Before dark the Yankees reappear, running, routed, throwing away their impedimenta. The companies keep some sort of order, loose. In the meadow by the railway station an attempt at a stand is made. Dark. Firing. Bugles and drums. And the sound of galloping horses, thundering supply-wagons, swearing, cursing men.

Bullets flying. The Waverley household descends to the cellar. Godfrey mounts guard again in the library. The black people take what refuge they can in the kitchen and the cabins.

"Maria, do pray stop peeping outdoors," commands Old Miss. "You will be killed without doubt."

"Dey's runnin', Old Miss. Dey sho' is er-runnin'. Dem Yankees! Don' Ah likes ter see 'em runnin,' though!"

At dawn come the Confederates, General Early's men. Exhausted, happy, victorious. Hunter's army is forced to retreat across the mountains whence they came. The population of Belair swarms out to greet the Confederates. They fetch out what little food is to be had, the last vestiges salvaged from the raiders.

Near the carriage gate at Waverley lies the dead body of a Yankee. A detail of Southern soldiers is preparing to bury him. Like an animal, a horse or a dog.

" Stop ! " commands Old Miss, appearing on the scene. " Let me look through his pockets. There may be some letter, some trinket he would like to have sent home. Let us try to identify him."

" All right, lady." And the soldiers stand aside, leaning on their shovels.

Miss stoops down. She rummages through the pockets. In a silver watch-case is a lock of jet black hair tied with red silk thread. And there is a little hussif, stocked with needles and thread, tucked away in a corner of the knap-sack. Also a letter, soaked with blood and sweat, the writing hardly legible. It is from his mother, her name and address, and . . . " for God and country, my brave son . . ." bloody words.

Old Miss takes the letter and the watch and the hussif. Then she buttons the blouse again. " Lay him now in his grave," she says. The ladies join her. Miss opens her Prayer Book . . ." We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away," she reads from the Burial of the Dead. That grave is not covered without tears and prayers.

CHAPTER XXXVII

A MILITARY wedding! A double wedding! Charles Rudd is home on leave. Ten days only. And Harvey Twitchell obtains permission to go to Belair to be married.

The house is full of officers, full of girls. It is a very gay affair. Laughter and chatter all over the place. Mr. Tirwell cannot come home for the marriage. He sends his blessing. But Edward Rayfield is there. He will give away the brides. They wear red calico dresses, the best to be had.

Dr. Tissert is on hand in surplice and stole, his monstrous Prayer Book in his hands. The old gentleman trembles a great deal since his son was killed.

Before the wedding there is a christening, Lotty's baby son.

Mrs. Menckel holds the baby. Old Miss holds the big silver bowl filled with fresh clear water. Dr. Tissert pours the water over the small squirming head . . . "Thomas, I baptize thee . . ." A son! but alas, not a Tirwell.

Time for the other ceremony. Mr. Menckel sits down at the piano. He strikes up a march . . . "Dixie! Dixie!" The company claps loudly. The two brides in their red calico wedding-dresses come down the front stairs. The bridegrooms wait, all happy impatience, below.

Three daughters married, and one so young!

The week is given over to gaiety and joy. Not for a long time has Waverley been so crowded, and callers coming in all day long. The Lesters drive over every day. And the delightful Wileys, the refugees from Norfolk, walk across the fields to Waverley every afternoon.

Mrs. "Bachelor" Bassett is frequently there, and the Menckels, and Mrs. Hooper with her brood of children clinging to her skirts. The dreary, sad autumn cannot dampen the happiness at Waverley in the week of the double wedding.

Soon over, the happy times. The soldier husbands must ride away and leave their brides behind. War! But if the brave girls weep, it is in secret. To their husbands and lovers they show only smiles and tender love. God speed the end of the war!

Such a hard winter, so cold, so much snow. Little to eat, and that of the most mean. And all the time disheartening news from the army. The Unions armies are replenished, victualed, handsomely equipped. But the Confederacy is dying. Hope against hope for the Cause. Hope against hope for Lee and his generals. Small hope, but high courage!

Aunt Twitchell dies in December. Not one of her children can reach her for the last hours or the funeral.

Tirwell comes home in January. A brief leave. He is very gray, and his face is drawn and thin, his uniform in rags. Worst of all, his high and buoyant spirit is broken. He sits all day by the library fire, brooding, brooding. And his wife sits opposite him. The only thing that rouses him is the news that Mrs. Lee and two of her daughters will stop a few days at Waverley on their way from Richmond to Lexington. Tirwell is touched and proud to have the ladies of the family of his Commander-in-Chief guests under his roof. The time of their brief visit sees him roused and his old self again. At table he is delightful with stories and repartee.

Old Sidonia comes to the back door. She is a "free nigger," the terror of the neighbourhood. She lives by herself in a rotten cabin some distance from the town. She comes to Waverley. She asks to see the "marster."

Robert goes out to her. There she sits in a wreck of a

cart drawn by a battered ox. She is dressed in rags, a heterogeneous collection of materials and colours sewed up into some sort of garments. She wears a man's tall hat stuck full of rooster feathers about the crown.

" Well, Sidonia ? "

The hard old black thing reaches around to pull aside some hay in her cart.

" Marster, I done brung yu an' de ladies dese hams," she says, discovering six or eight fine hams on the floor of her cart. " I hears de Yankees took all yer meat las' summer. Dese is hard times, marster, an' de Good Book say we mus' help one ernuther. I saved dese hams when dem Yankees wuz hyar. Now, I wants yu ter have 'em. I got plenty. I kep' me one ham at home."

" Why, Sidonia, how on earth did you save your meat ? "

" When de Yankees come, marster, I jes' lay hit out in de yard, an' I sprinkles er little meal on hit. An' when de Yankees come, I stan's in ma do', I do, an' I says : ' Gen'elmen, hep' yo'sef. Dat meat's done been pizened. Ef yu-all wants ter die, jes' hep yo'sef.' " Sidonia smiles a wry and cunning smile. " An' dey nuver teched ma meat ! " she concludes with triumph in her tone.

" Thank you, thank you, Sidonia, but I could never deprive you of all those hams. You may need them yourself."

" Marster, I done tol' yu I wants yu ter have dis meat. Ef you please, sir, take hit from Ole Sidonia."

The railroad is entirely disorganised. The Tirwells send Mrs. Lee and her daughters away in the carriage, Taft driving, Tirwell himself as escort.

" Good-bye, my valued Mrs. Tirwell," cries Mrs. Lee. " In the future I trust we shall often meet. I shall never forget all your goodness at this time."

Old Miss stands looking after the carriage. It rumbles round the circle, skirts the syringa clump and the

crape-myrtles, and passes out of sight. Miss turns to Miss Kitty Langley, who stands beside her.

"There goes a noble and tragic woman," she says.

Miss Langley bursts into tears. "Of course Richmond will fall," she replies.

Old Miss throws up her hands and hastens into the house. All the afternoon she remains in her chamber; on her knees is open the great family Bible, in one hand her Prayer Book. But Miss neither reads no prays. She stares hard ahead of her all the time. "Of course Richmond will fall!"

Harvey Twitchell is in camp in the far southwestern part of the State. He writes for Mara to come to him. He has rooms in a farmhouse. Time is precious. He may be ordered away again at any time. She must come while she can. Old Miss, from some very secret store, brings out a little sugar, a little tea, and a very small flask of brandy. Mara packs the precious articles in her bag and with Maria for company sets off for Pulaski.

She is back in five weeks. Harvey has been ordered away.

"Ma, I think I am going to have a baby," she says to Old Miss.

Mara is ill. It is not pregnancy; it is typhoid fever. Old Miss adds nursing to her multitude of other duties. The doctor says Mara is not dangerously ill. She will recover with good care and nursing. But one must always be careful of typhoid. It is a treacherous disease.

After a few days of fevered lethargy, Mara seems better. She makes a veritable salon of her sick-room. She delights in visitors. She laughs and talks. She sews, lying in bed and making jokes about dropping her scissors and spools. Lotty sits in the room, her baby on her knees, playing her guitar, singing songs, chatting.

Spring is coming. Mara is nearly well. To-morrow she may sit up.

" Old Miss, you are worn to a frazzle," says Mara to her mother. " You really must rest yourself a little. Please go away to-day. Order the carriage and drive out to Bellevue. Spend the day with the Lesters. You haven't seen them for weeks and weeks."

" Yes, Ma, do," entreats Miss Belle. " We'll take good care of Mara."

Much persuasion, but at last Miss relents. Taft brings round the carriage. Old Miss and one of the Langley children climb in. Off they drive for the day. The March sunshine is bright, streaming over the window-sills, flooding the rooms.

" I must stop at Mrs. Wiley's," says Old Miss, " and leave her this basket of fresh bread and the eggs."

" Girls, I am ravenously hungry," declares Mara. " Give me a good dinner to-day. And don't forget the cabbage pickle."

Miss returns home at sunset. Mara is drowsy. Miss goes at once to visit her invalid. She strokes her brow. She feels her pulse. Mara seems so dull.

" Dearest, I'm glad you've come home," and Mara looks up into Old Miss's face. " I don't feel very well just now."

No ; high fever. Miss sends for Dr. Spooner. But it is too late. Mara is in agony. At midnight she dies. Her last breath whispers : " You can't keep me from Harvey ! "

But how will they ever tell Harvey ?

Mara, Mara, truly well named ; thy name is Sorrow !

It is certain that the war must end. Petersburg ! Richmond ! Any day now the news may come. Lost cause. Lee is at Appomattox. All the roads are full of soldiers returning home. The country is desolate . . . no fences, no planting, no cattle. And the freed negroes ranging loose. The end of the war ! Four years of tragedy sunk in blood !

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SPRING; April. Lengthening days and pale sunshine. The end of the war! Four years of tragedy sunk in blood!

Armies disbanding. Hope lost. The roads are full of men walking home. Wrecks. No shoes, few clothes. Hungry, marauding fellows. And black people, free! No working this spring. Let the weeds grow and the fields run waste.

Old Miss walks in her garden. Desolation. But the asparagus is sprouting, and the gooseberries show tender buds. No one to work in the garden. With trowel and pruning scissors Old Miss prods her and there, clips the shoots of the grapevines, prunes the raspberries and roses.

Miss Belle works daily amongst the flowers, trowelling, planting. Mrs. Rudd essays experiments in the pantry and the kitchen, concocting a brew from sweet-potatoe parings, chestnuts, and crusts of bread. Imitation coffee. And all food doled out parsimoniously.

The black people are singing and ranging the countryside. The weeks pass. They come creeping back to Waverley, standing embarrassed, rubbing their hands together, shifting from one foot to the other. Every day a few at the back door.

"Miss, we ain't got nuthin' ter eat. Could yu give us er little meal an' er rasher er bacon?"

Miss cannot bear to see them. "Tell them I have nothing, nothing," she says to Martha, and hastily seeks the seclusion of the chamber, there to hide her weeping.

The house-servants remain, sharing with the white people the poverty and the sorrow of the place. Godfrey

tries to construct a few fences with rails and old board. Maria and Young Prissy set some hens. Judith does all the house-work, face grim, eyes filmy with tears. "Ma Ole Miss, ma Ole Miss," she whispers, choking.

Godfrey sleeps in the library on a pallet, axe beside him. The country is full of hungry tramps, home-going soldiers. All the Waverley household, all women, crowd for the night into the chamber. There are two great beds set up there, and trundles, and pallets.

When will the men come home? Soon? Nobody knows. There is fighting still, here and there. But the end is not far off. Richmond falls. Lee is at Appomattox.

April evening, misty sky, low, weak sun. The crows fly cawing over the tops of the oaks. Bare trees with grim black branches. No vestige of spring in the oaks.

Old Miss stands at the door of Waverley. Tears course down her cheeks. She wipes them away. She gazes over the desolate lawn. The weeds are springing up like green moss in the white sand of the drive. No fences to be seen. Over yonder the smoke from the chimney of the Academy, and farther off the thinner smoke from the Beech and Brook Hotel. No sound of trains on the railroad, no sound of human life in the village.

A man walks slowly across the lawn. It is Andy Buffard, with his slight limp. He walks very slowly, his old felt hat pulled down over his eyes. He comes before the door. He looks up at Miss.

"Well, Mr. Buffard? What news to-day?"

"No news, Mrs. Tirwell. I have a telegram for you." He hands her the yellow envelope.

"The end is near. Courage. Love. Robert." Miss sees the words through a blur of tears.

"Let me give you a cup of our sweet-potato coffee, Mr. Bluffard."

"No, thank you, ma'am. I must hurry back to the hotel."

No word spoken at supper. Silence. The yellow telegram lies open on the hall table. All read it. No one speaks.

Dark, and the house is closed. All the shutters bolted, the outer doors locked. Not a light anywhere. In the chamber the womenfolk, fully dressed, lie on the pallets and beds. The clock in the hall strikes the hours. Still early in the evening. Eight o'clock ; nine o'clock ; ten No one speaks, yet no one sleeps. Waverley is full of darkness and silence, heavy with the atmosphere of sorrow.

Ten o'clock. The wind is still. Not even the sound of the soughing of the branches of the trees. Some one knocking on the shutter of the chamber window. Gently. Tap-tap ; tap-tap.

" Who is it ? "

The clock strikes ten.

A low voice. Is it woman's or man's, negro or white ?

" Lee has surrendered ! " Nothing more.

In the chamber the sound of women crying. Weeping.

It is the end of the war ! Lee has surrendered !

O God ! O God !

CHAPTER XXXIX

JUNE, 1865.

The gentlemen are home. Edward Rayfield will live at Waverley. He and Lotty have the room over the library for theirs. The baby's crib is at the foot of their big bed, one of the beds with the posts and the legs sawed off.

Martha is packing to leave Dr. Rudd is going to settle in Georgia. Atlanta. Old Miss gives her silver, china, glass. She gives her linen and blankets, feather beds, pillows. The back porch is full of crates and boxes. Godfrey is nailing and sawing all day long Martha weeps with her packing. She is going away from home. She is going away from Waverley . . . so far off, so far away, to Atlanta.

Every day at five o'clock Mr. Tirwell walks down to the depot to get the only mail of the day, a newspaper and a few letters. Every day Old Miss waits his return on the steps of the end-porch.

" Any news from Harvey? Any letter to-day? "

No letter; no news. Since the fall of Richmond not a word of Harvey Twitchell. " Lost in action," says the official report, but the Tirwells are slow to let hope die.

August.

" Will you come to the back door to see the stone for Mara's grave? " Tirwell asks of his wife. He slips her hand under his arm. Together they go to the back door.

A negro stone-cutter stands there with a small slab propped against his knees. It is cut in two panels. On the left is Mara's name and the dates of her birth and death. On the right panel are cut the words: " Captain

Harvey Twitchell, lost in action at the fall of Richmond. A brave and gallant soldier."

" I cannot bear to look at it ! " And Old Miss turns herself into the house again. She locks herself into the chamber. The sound of her weeping fills all the house. " Mara, Mara, my daughter ! Harvey, my son ! "

" Miss Mara's ver' las' wurds wuz : ' Yu cyarn't keep me from Harvey.' I hyearn her say dem wurds jes' ez she close her eyes," says Judith. " She call Mr. Harvey, an' what yu spec but he's gwine jine er on de udder side er de River ! "

It takes a long time for life to right itself. But it does so at last. The Rudds leave for the South. Old Miss kisses Martha again and again. They go away on the train. Young Prissy goes with them to be the only servant in the new home. Mr. Tirwell goes away, too. He goes to St. Louis to edit a newspaper. He cannot bear to stay at Waverley in the midst of desolation and sorrow. He is hardly sixty years old, yet he seems a very old man. His face is thin and very lined, and his hair is gray all over his head.

" In a few years I'll come home," says he.

Edward Rayfield begins to look after the reconstitution of the farm, the recultivation of the soil. But Old Miss is manager of Waverley. Her word is law, her will unquestioned. Very gradually life begins to right itself again.

But there is so little money. The whole country is so poor. Rolls and rolls of Confederate bills. Worthless, utterly valueless. Lotty Rayfield pastes ten- and twenty-dollar bills on canvas stretched on a frame. It is a screen for her room. Fearful irony.

Old Miss sells some of the woodland and the pasture, but the value is a mere song. Still, the payments are made in silver coin. That means a great deal. Mr. Andy Buffard is the purchaser. He is buying up land right and

left. He is surprisingly enterprising. He opens a livery-stable at the hotel. He breeds horses and cattle. His employees go about harvesting, haying for the near-by farms. They cut ice and haul it from the ponds to the ice-houses. They plough the gardens in the spring and fall. Mr. Andy Buffard has more money than any of the old landed gentry.

1870.

Robert Tirwell dies in St. Louis. They bring his body home for burial. He is an important man. Belair gathers to a man to do honour to his name. His coffin lies open in the parlour at Waverley. Crowds of people come across the lawns, remove their hats at the door, and tiptoe into the parlour. They stand for a moment beside the coffin, looking at the quiet face. The lines of age and suffering are there, but the strain and the care of life are gone. The eyes are closed, the hands folded on the black double-breasted coat. "He was a great man," many say, and shake their heads as they leave the room. Two old Confederate soldiers watch all day by the coffin of Robert Tirwell.

At night a party of gentlemen, neighbours, are watching in the library. It is the custom. They have coffee, and biscuits and ham. They are smoking and talking in subdued tones. The parlour is dark. Every hour one of the watchers takes a candle. He goes down the passage. He enters the room where the coffin is. All well here. And he returns.

It is Mr. Menckel's turn to make the visit to the parlour. He lays down his cigar. With a lamp-lighter he lights the candle from the fire on the hearth. As he departs, all the conversation ceases. There will be silence till he returns from his visit to death. All well? All well.

Mr. Menckel walks softly down the dim cavern of a passage. His candle-flame throws grotesque and gigantic

shadows upon the walls. All the house is sleeping, the family. Mr. Menckel softly opens the parlour door. He thrusts his hand that holds the candle into the darkness before him. The slight draught makes the light flicker. Then he sees. But it is not so dark in the parlour. There is another candle burning there. It is in the hand of Tirwell's wife. Old Miss stands beside the coffin looking down on the face of the man she served and loved. She wears a dark wrapper, and a shawl over her head. She neither moves nor speaks. She does not even glance toward the door to see who is entering. She looks steadfastly on the white face of her husband lying in his coffin.

"Meessess Tirwell, Ma'am," expostulates Mr. Menckel. "Why do you come here? You should be in bed. We are watching for you?"

"I know, my friend. But all day the people were here. I came just now for a moment myself. No; do not go." Miss raises her hand to stay the visitor about to depart. "You knew him very well."

Menckel swallows. He is not devoid of emotion. But his sorrow is chiefly for his one-time mistress. "Yaas," he says, "I knew him. He loved life ver' much. He had a wide, wide interest."

"He loved life, but life never satisfied him. He was never content. Fortune and fame were always just out of his reach. He pursued them with ardour. He never captured them."

"He has, let us hope, both of them now."

"I hope so," says Old Miss, and walks without another word out of the room.

The next morning she follows the coffin to the grave. But nobody sees her face. She wears her widow's long black veil. What is hidden under that? No one knows. No one sees.

In the hall at Waverley, after the funeral, Belle falls

on her mother's breast in a passion of weeping. "My dear, dear Pa!"

"There, there, my dear!" Miss soothes her daughter. "Be glad for your Pa because his life in this world of great hardship and sorrow is done. But for us . . ." Miss cannot finish. She, too, is weeping. She sees her life in her mind's eye. Is it over? Is this the end for her, too? What is there left for her to wait or live for?

"I am a very weak and cowardly old lady," says Miss, wiping away her tears.

But here is Judith with a tray of tea. Bright fires all over the house. The windows unshuttered, letting in a flood of sunlight. The funeral of the master of Waverley is over.

The will is read in the library. Everything left to "my brave and faithful wife." The executors are Edward Raymond and Charles Rudd. The estate is mostly land. Little money. Through the years a handsome fortune has dwindled . . . mismanagement, speculation, foolishness, war, all take their toll of the Tirwell property. Little salvaged. Will the executors, the two sons-in-law, be able to recuperate and restore a part of the family fortune?

Miss sits passive while the will is read. When it is finished, she rises to embrace each of her sons-in-law in turn. "I have the same confidence in you that I always reposed in my dear husband," she says.

What a generous, faithful, courageous woman!

"Judith, we will have our cake and wine now. Our business is completed." Old Miss herself cuts the cake and pours the wine into the little tiny glasses. The family sit about in the library eating and drinking the refection as the concluding ceremony of the ritual, the reading of the will of the very last male of the illustrious Tirwell line.

" He loved life, but never captured it," thinks Miss in her heart as she retires from the room. " Ah me ! my life is over, too ! " But she goes about her accustomed duties with all her usual vigour and dispatch.

Life ? Death ? Who is judge of which is which ?

CHAPTER XL

" And the little kitten ran right under my dress. Then he ran out again, and in again, and out again. Miss Buffard gave me that kitten. Grandma took him home for her very own and she named him——"

" Tat ! " shouts Thomas Rayfield, sliding off Old Miss's knees to stand before her on the floor. " Tatterdemalion, just the same as my pussy-cat."

" Quite so, dear. And I named him Tatterdemalion. And . . . and when Old Miss was married, there came Tatterdemalion in at the parlour door, right up to your Gran'pa's side, your Gran'pa Steppleton, I mean, and when the minister said : ' Who giveth this woman to be married to this man ? ' Tat waved his tail in consent, and he didn't even meow when my Pa stepped on his foot. I took him to Franklin Forest with me in a nice big airy basket. And most of the cats on this place are descendants of that very same cat ! "

The story is interrupted. Miss Belle comes in to speak to her Ma. Miss Belle has a flushed face and her hands are covered with soot.

" Ma, Maria says she cannot cook another day in that old-fashioned fireplace in the kitchen. She hasn't the least ability to bake in the old ovens I have been trying to help her . . . but look at me ! "

" Then I am sure I don't know what we shall do," declares Old Miss. " We always have cooked in that

fireplace. Christian was an excellent cook. The food was above reproach. The truth of the matter is Maria is not a born cook. Perhaps we could try somebody else."

"There's just nobody else, Old Miss. Maria is the only coloured person who will even consent to cook for us on the open hearth." Plainly Miss Belle has an axe to grind. "Don't you think we could buy a stove?"

"That I should come to that!" exclaims Old Miss. "I did so trust one thing would be left us of the old times."

"I know, Ma. But in the old times there were plenty of servants, a man for the wood and the water alone."

"Now, don't tell me you want pipes, too. I shall never consent to give up using the well." Old Miss is emphatic, but she protests. The current of the times is strong against her.

"Well, we really must do something before Martha and the children come from Georgia in June. We ought to keep abreast of the times. Mrs. Hooper, and Mrs. Menckel, too, have long used cooking-stoves. And you can't imagine how convenient it is to have water, running water, right in the house. The Hoopers find it the very greatest convenience."

"I consider the pipes most unhealthy," replies Miss. "I am convinced Mr. Hooper's illness last year was caused by having a bathroom right in the house where people live. The outdoor privies are the only healthy and safe things for people to use."

But Miss Belle feels exasperated after her labours with Maria in the kitchen. The Rudds will soon be here. Belle is determined to make an impress on her mother. Times have changed so. It is impossible to live as one used to do before the War.

"Now, Ma," she argues, "pray listen to reason."

"There's no use in arguing, my love, my pet . . . I shall not be reconciled."

"You may never be reconciled, but you may have to bend to necessity."

"Well, we'll think of it some other time. I'm busy now amusing this child while Lotty gets a cat-nap of sleep. She was up all night with Edward's earache."

"Oh, Ma!" It is too much. Miss Belle feels helpless. She retires.

"And Tatterdemalion lived to a very great old age indeed . . ."

The Rudds arrive. They have the very best rooms in the house. Young Prissy comes, too. She upsets the whole establishment for the sake of "ma chillun," meaning the brood of little Rudds.

Thomas Rayfield does not get on well with the little Rudds. They are overbearing, and he is accustomed to being the only master, saving his grandmother and Judith, on the whole of the Waverley estate. There are infantile contests, fights, screams, reprimands, punishments. Waverley is in a hubbub. But Old Miss thinks the summers all that they should be. She gives parties for the children. She invited much company to see Martha. Old Miss lives from summer to summer, from the departure of the Rudds to their coming again.

"Old Miss is greatly aged," comments Mrs. Rudd every year to her sister. "I can't understand why you don't see it, Sister," she says. "If I may say so, I think she does entirely too much. Why don't you take some of the housekeeping off her hands?"

"I beg Ma not to do so many things," says Miss Belle, "but she will do it. She says she always has done so and she hopes to continue as long as she is able to keep on her feet. Really, she is quite a wonder."

"Sister Lotty is very selfish, too," comments the redoubtable Martha.

"Well, I'll be glad when the whistle of the train blows to take them home," remarks Lotty Rayfield of her sister's family. "Then, perhaps" (emphasis on "perhaps"!) "we can have a little peace."

Thomas is fighting with his cousin Charlie. "An' I'll be jus' ez glad as my mother when the whistle of the train blows to take all of you-all home," he parrots in his rage.

Charlie bursts into injured tears. He flies to his mother. He repeats the remark and quotes the source of the sentiment. Confusion results. Consternation reigns. Mrs. Rudd is in tears. Mrs. Rudd never thought the day would come when she would be unwelcome in her own home, under her mother's roof. She will not stay another day if that is the unkind way Sister Lotty feels about her own sister. She begins to pack. She will telegraph immediately to Dr. Rudd to expect them all back in Atlanta again the day after to-morrow.

Old Miss is distraught. Old Miss protests vehemently. Old Miss cajoles. Tears, apologies, explanations, pardons . . . a whole catena of emotions and readjustments before the Rudds are reconciled and at peace again. And Thomas Rayfield stands in the corner of his mother's room with his face to the wall. He is punished. He stands in the corner. He sniffles and cries. What is it all about? He does so wish the whistle of the train would blow that will take all the Rudds south again.

"Old Miss," says Mrs. Rudd, "Dr. Rudd and I think you ought to have a cooking-stove in the kitchen."

"Oh, Martha, daughter!" Old Miss shakes her head. She does not expect this sentiment from Martha. Martha always praises the "old-time" cooking at Waverley so highly.

"Well, we do, though. And, furthermore, we've bought you one! Will you please to step out in the kitchen. The stove is already in place."

Martha gives her Ma a cooking-stove! It is already in place! What a marvel! How generous the Rudds! The old fireplace is closed up with a sheet of metal and on the wide hearth stands the shiny black stove. Actually a cooking-stove in the Waverley kitchen!

Old Miss stands gazing on the thing "It's wonderful!" she says. "It's like a railway engine, all but the wheels. I hope and pray it won't set fire to the kitchen or blow up."

"Narm," says Maria, a trifle uncertainly. She herself is not so sure she likes or knows how to manage the cooking-stove, now that she possesses it.

"What's that big round thing at the side?"

"That's the boiler. That's for hot water, only you haven't any water in the house. You haven't any pipes."

"One thing at a time, please," begs Old Miss. "I can't possibly change so fast. What *would* old Christian say!"

"I expect she's turning in her grave right this minute," jokes Mrs. Rudd.

"Good Lord!" says Maria, thunderstruck at the mere mention of such a possibility. The ghost of old Christian still haunts the kitchen.

But Old Miss is reconciled to the cooking-stove solely because her dear Martha gives it to her . . . nothing else in the world . . .

"Roxy, do pray come out to the kitchen and inspect the wonderful cooking-stove Martha and Charlie have given me," says Old Miss to Mrs. Menckel when she comes to call. The same to Mrs. Bassett and Mrs. Hooper. Old Miss is quite proud of the cooking-stove in the kitchen.

Summer twilights. Old Miss sitting on the front porch with her grandchildren. Happy hours. Peaceful moments.

"Tell us about the War, Old Miss," they beg. "Tell

us how you buried the Yankee soldier. . . . Tell us how Maria would peep out of the cellar and almost, almost nearly got shot by the Yankees. . . . Tell about Godfrey and the axe. . . . Did Uncle Taft come back safe with the carriage full of silver and money? . . . Were you scared when the Yankees came? . . . What did you give them to eat? Tell us more. Tell us more."

And Old Miss tells and tells the stories of the days of the War. The years are passing now, and the memories, though vivid, lose their sting. Fairy tales to the children. Bless their hearts, they never knew those tragic years! Life in retrospect; Old Miss tells many, many stories of the past, her childhood, her girlhood, Franklin Forest, early years at Waverley, and the War. Life in retrospect. The past. So many years. Such a store of memories. Long, long ago. Life!

CHAPTER XLI

THE spirit of the South is vested in its women. The war is over. The men are back on the farms, wresting a living from the impoverished country. But the women are unreconstructed. The suffering of the great Four Years yields its fruit of bitterness. The women of the South carry on the traditions and the spirit of the Confederacy. Militant!

Once a year the Daughters of the Confederacy assemble in every locality for Memorial Day, the end of the spring when the first summer flowers are lush in all the gardens.

On a hill near Belair is a bare acre of ground, a sedgy field. Here are soldiers buried. Belair's local dead, local heroes. With lawn-fête and card-party, with bazaars and subscriptions, the Daughters of the Confederacy collect enough money to fence in the plot of graves and erect a monument to the dead. The fence is in panels of iron spikes, hardly permanent proof against rust and the weather, but sufficient to keep out the cows and ranging mules on the hilly commons above the town. The Monument is a shaft of white marble mounted on a bulky base of blue granite, unpretentious but noble and beauteous to the loving eyes of the devoted women.

Memorial Day with a hot May sun and a deep blue sky. Belair is alive. From the Waverley gardens dozens of young women and girls, dressed in white with red sashes and red badges on their breasts, transport bouquets and wreaths to the court-house yard. In the square are waiting carriages, buggies, livery-stable hacks, all filled with the female population of the countryside. Excited, perspiring children from the schools are drawn

up in phalanxes in the yard, arduously kept in order by their lady teachers. A scratch band is in attendance. Major "Bachelor" Bassett sits heavily on his gray nag, behind him the rank and file of what's left of fighting manhood, the dregs and lees in the cup drained by the war.

The church bells are ringing. Country people are pouring into the county seat in their wagons and rigs. The court-house auditorium is filling with a hot and fan-waving crowd. On a moment the bells cease. The band marches into the building blaring a nameless tune. The local chapter of the Daughters marches next, walking proudly, heads up, eyes gleaming. And after them shuffles the motley gang of veterans, many comfortably in their cups. But they are all saints. They are the Veterans!

Old Miss is president of the Daughters. She sits in a large arm-chair, her Daughters surround her in triple semi-circles. Judge Lester presides. He is so fat that he can scarcely open his little eyes. Major Bassett stamps in with his "men." They occupy a whole block of reserved seats.

Sis Lester is in tears, of course. Mrs. Lester, for once in her life, comes to life and attends a public function. For years she has never left home, has lived like an anchoress at Bellevue. The other Lester sisters are in attendance on their Ma.

Judge Lester rises. He gulps a drink from the china pitcher of ice-water on the desk. He lifts his hand. Silence. Judge Lester says: "Come to order. Opening prayer. Dr. Tissert." This eloquence moves Sis to a fresh outburst of weeping. She cannot rise to her feet with all the other people when poor trembling old Dr. Tissert totters to the edge of the platform to put up the "invocation."

Dr. Tissert's beard waves thinly. The hairs are falling

out. His daughters brush him off many times a day, but always there is a plentiful supply of hair and dandruff on the front of his coat and vest. Under his shaggy brows Dr. Tissert's two pale-blue eyes range over the heads of the company. He lifts a feeble, trembling hand. He makes a prayer. There is a rustle of amens, and all sit down again.

Judge Lester makes an oration, rambling, full of elaborate figures of speech, meaningless. He waves his short fat arms and shakes a pudgy fist. It is duly impressive. Old Miss rocks complacently. Memorial Day bids fair for success.

It is hot in the court-house, and getting hotter, but who cares? "For our glorious dead, our noble men of the Confederate States of America!" Between items of the programme, the band bleats its doleful tunes.

Dr. Tissert again on the stand. He holds a roll of paper. The Veterans stand up. Dr. Tissert reads the list of names, and the men answer. If there is a silence, one of the Daughters steps up to the rostrum. She hands up a tiny Confederate flag into the hands of Judge Lester. Each year the supply of flags is greater.

The sombre roll-call is over. Silence. Signal. "Dixie!" There is a shout. The building rocks with the singing. The horns and the drums are drowned in the sound of the singing. "Dixie! Dixie!" Tears. Cheers. Handkerchiefs waving. Handclapping. "Dixie! Dixie!"

The people troop outside. In the dusty street the procession is formed. Old Miss, with her two aides, rides in a lunging victoria. The line of vehicles, marchers, Veterans is endless. The long queue trails down the road, up the hill, to the barren spot where the graves are. The Monument is covered with canvas and a flag. The stuff bellies in the wind, whipping at the cords and ropes.

Here at the cemetery all is formality, the Veterans on one side, the Daughters on the other, Judge Lester, Dr. Tissert, and Mrs. Tirwell in the centre, standing immediately under the Monument. Sis Lester is in new floods of weeping.

The bugle quavers uncertainly. Old Miss stands proudly erect. She reads a little speech of donation. Judge Lester makes a few (not very apposite) remarks of acceptance. Dr. Tissert says another prayer. There is a hymn, and "Maryland, My Maryland," is sung by the school children. Two little girls, one all in white, the other entirely in blue, step gingerly forward. Old Miss puts the ends of two lead cords in their hands. "And we unveil this monument to the perpetual memory of the sons of the Confederacy, who gave their lives for our undying Cause . . ."

"Pull! Pull the strings, dears!" exclaims Old Miss in a whisper.

The children pull. The canvas and bunting covers slip off the marble shaft. A wave of appreciative sound escapes the lungs of the throng, just as though the marble shaft has never been seen before, whereas every chick and child of them has watched its erection for days and weeks before this time. Not a soul but gazes on that monument with awe and pride. Not a soul but lifts the voice in loud applause. There is much handshaking. Congratulations. The Daughters could not be more greatly complimented.

"It is a triumph of a day," announces Old Miss to her household in the evening. "Now, the memory of the Great Strife, the Noble Cause, will never die in Belair!"

Dr. Rudd is at Waverley when the ladies return home from the unveiling of the Monument. He comes unexpectedly. He is beset with questions about the welfare of his family. Martha sends some crocheted

head-rests for the chair-backs in the parlour. Old Miss fingers them lovingly. Martha, absent daughter, mother of a brood. She is undeniably Old Miss's favourite child.

Miss Belle takes Brother Charlie into the library to show him the garnishings along the raw edges of the book-shelves, leather leaves stiff with black asphaltum paint, nailed in classic designs on the bookshelves.

"And see these grasses I have frosted with alum," she points out. "Tell Martha that rotten lemons are the very best things in the world for polishing brass. Look how the fenders shine!"

Dr. Rudd and Edward Rayfield are closeted together all the evening. In the morning they request a solemn conclave with Old Miss.

Old Miss puts on her stiff black moirée silk, and the gloves. She tucks a fresh "mourning handkerchief" under the hard edge of her corsage. She pins on her old gold watch and loops the fine chain back and forth across her breast on little hooks. She takes her seat in a high-backed rocker beside the hearth in the library.

"Now, Ma," and Dr. Rudd clears his throat, "Edward and I are not satisfied with the investment of your money. It's safe, of course. But we think you can do better than three per cent. Of course, we would not make any alteration in the investments without your perfect understanding and consent. But both of us, both of us, feel strongly that you would do well to buy bonds in the new real-estate company for the Belair Boom." Dr. Rudd clears his throat. He looks at his brother-in-law. But Edward will not look at him.

"What do you think, Edward?' Old Miss turns to the silent man.

"I agree with Brother Charles. I think you ought to reinvest. These are hard times. At best there is not much money. Your income is barely enough for you to

live on. The new Boom is sure to increase everything."

Old Miss sighs. She takes out her handkerchief to twist it in her hands. She fingers her watch-chain.

"Well, what do you say, Ma? Have we your consent to go ahead?"

"All I have to ask is, is the proposed investment safe . . . ?"

"As the Bank of England! I give you my word for it," says Dr. Rudd.

"It is a matter of which I as a woman am likely to know little," says Old Miss. "It is man's business. Do what seems best to you in the matter, gentlemen."

"Then, you will sign here . . . and here . . . and here . . ." Rudd has the papers ready. Rayfield hands his mother-in-law the pen.

Old Miss takes her spectacles out of their long leather case. She hooks the ends over her ears, adjusts the lenses to her sight. She looks at the papers spread out on the desk-top. Meaningless words . . . spaces, flourishes, borderings . . . legal documents.

"Ah me!" she sighs very low, and writes her name, "Charlotte Steppleton Tirwell," on the lines that Edward indicates.

CHAPTER XLII

Old Miss and Miss Belle sit on the front porch. A full moon rolls over the tops of the trees. The sky is pale and perfectly clear. How hot the night!

Old Miss fans herself with a large palm-leaf fan, gently. Pat-fat, pat-fat, the fan goes against her breast. Pat-fat, pat-fat, monotonously.

"I remember," says Old Miss, "when I was a girl I used to ride my pony, Falcon, under these oaks. Your grandpa beside me on his horse The grove was much larger then. It went all the way beyond the Hoopers, and became the West Woods. Just to think," she says, "that I used to look up at that very same moon so many years ago; the same moon has looked down on me as child and young lady, as wife and mother. It shone on my Pa and Ma, on our dear, dear Belair Mansion. And so many loved ones. Dead and gone now, all dead and gone. How many changes I and that same moon have seen in my life, how much joy, how much sorrow! Time has harried my soul."

"Now, Ma, you will begin to cry if you go on in that vein."

"There is little left for me now but tears," continues Old Miss. "I am almost the last of my generation. Our great South is ravished. Our own fortune is practically nothing. To think of the old days . . . the abundance . . . the happiness . . . the people coming and . . . going . . .!"

"Now, Ma, you are worse and worse!"

"How we shall live on our meagre means is beyond me," says Old Miss. "My income is less and less adequate for us. We got along fairly well as long as

Edward and Lotty lived here. I never approved of their removing to Indiana. The land in Virginia was always considered wonderful for its fertility. I cannot believe Indiana surpasses it."

"Here comes Rosa Hooper," says Miss Belle. "How-do-you-do, Rosa? Did you come down by yourself?"

"Yes, it's only a step across the way. Besides, the others are right behind me. We are bringing a marvellous invention for Old Miss to see. Mr. Buffard's son bought it for his store. He brought it over to our house to-night for us to see. Mamma said Old Miss must certainly enjoy it. So they are all coming over——"

"Well, what is it, Rosa?" asks Old Miss.

"It's called a talking machine——"

"Oh, yes, a telephone. But I did not know they could be carried about with you wherever you go," says Old Miss.

"No, it's not a telephone. It is something quite different. There are no wires connecting anywhere. You put some rubber tubes in your ears and the thing speaks or sings just like life."

"Is it possible!" exclaims Miss. "What wonders there are in the world to-day! I shall never understand them all. I thought the limit of human invention was reached with the steam cars . . . but the telegraph and the telephone, and electric lighting, and photography . . . wonders, wonders!" Old Miss shakes her head with stupefaction.

"Well, don't you want to hear the talking machine?" asks Rosa.

"By all means," says Old Miss. "My love," to Miss Belle, "light the lamp in the library. If Maria hasn't gone to bed, tell her to get some refreshments ready. Or, if she has, get the sponge cake and the wine yourself, will you?"

On the library table a smallish square case. Young

Andy Buffard is fumbling with it, untangling rubber tubes. From a satchel beside him he extracts several hollow waxen cylinders. It requires a good deal of preparation.

"Now, if you will all sit down close to the table. There are six tubes. Mrs. Tirwell, let me move your chair a little closer. Now, stick the ends of the tube in your ears. Listen!"

"I can't hear anything except a grating sound. Is that it?" asks Old Miss.

"No. Wait. Listen."

"Why, it seems to be a voice," says Old Miss, taking the tubes out of her ears. "Is it you, Andy? But why can't you speak without all this apparatus?"

"No, not I, Mrs. Tirwell. The voice is in the box, here engraved on these cylinders. It's recorded in the wax."

"Is it possible!" cries the old lady, sticking the tubes in her ears again. She extracts them again immediately. "No," she says, "no, it can't be possible to record and reproduce a human voice. I can't believe God intended it to be done. We are getting far too smart, too far beyond the Bible. It must be wicked. I will not listen."

The company all laugh very much. They try to persuade Old Miss to put the tubes in her ears again. But she won't. She is positive. It is too much. She gives up. She can't keep up with the times. Old Miss finds a more congenial task in serving the refreshments to her guests, sponge cake and wine.

CHAPTER XLIII

Old Miss is trowelling in the oleander tubs. The pale spring sunshine glares weakly on the sloping glass sides of the green-house. The water from the hogshead in the corner drips with a monotonous tinkle into the catch-bucket below the faucet. Lod Miss wears a shawl pinned with a vast safety-pin over her head. She trowels in the mould of the oleander tubs. The tears drop into the loam as she turns it up.

Mr. Menckel is dead. Belle is with Cousin Roxy at the Academy. Old Miss's heart aches for the passing of the loved faces, the dear memories of old times. She palliates her grief in work. Work, and tears.

A shadow falls across the oleanders. Judith comes to the doorway at the top of the green-house steps.

"Ole Miss, yu oughter come outer dis damp green-house. Yu come erlong in de house wid me. I done lit er fire in de liberry."

"Judith, come down in here and help me with the watering-pot. It's so heavy for me to lift. These tubs must be watered before I leave. Has Miss Belle come home yet?"

"Norm, Miss Belle sarnt word she gwine stav wid Miss Roxy all day. Sho' seem funny fer Mr. ıckel ter be gone, don' hit, Miss?"

"All the old ties are breaking, Judith. You and I are almost the last of the old generation."

"Yeppem, time flies an' de folks dies mighty fast dese days."

"Well, I trust to live one more summer so as to see your Miss Martha and her children once more."

"Lor, Ole Miss, dat ain't no ways fer yu ter talk.

Yu is gwine be spared us long time yit. I'se older den yu is. I'll be de fust ter go."

"Now, don't slip on those damp boards. Here, let me have one side of the watering-pot handle." Old Miss sticks her trowel in the earth. She reaches out her hand to give assistance to Judith. "Well, Judith," continues she, "we never can tell when our Heavenly Father will see fit to call us home. We have both lived a long life and seen many changes. Life ended for me when your master died. . . . Few of us older people can outlive the disasters of the War. Time ceased for us at the Surrender."

"Yeppem, things is mighty different to what dey wuz in de ole days." Judith hangs the watering-pot on its hook. "Now, Miss, dat's all, ain't it? Yu jes' come erlong in de house now."

In the library is Mrs. Hooper. She sits sidewise on the sofa so as not to crush her bustle. Her big mutton-leg sleeves seem larger than ever. Mrs. Hooper is trying to carry water on both shoulders. Bustles are going out of fashion, big sleeves coming in. Mrs. Hooper clings to the one while acceding to the other. Her hair is nearly white, a soft yellow-ivory whiteness, but the magnificence of her eyes, black and lustrous, defies the years and much child-bearing.

"Dear Old Miss," says Mrs. Hooper, rising to embrace the old lady as she comes in. "How are you? This bereavement for us all is sad, but it cannot be said to be a shock. We should be greatly thankful that our dear friend has come to the end of his long and painful road at last . . . two years of invalidism. . . . I hope and pray I shall never be such a burden and care to myself and to other people."

Old Miss embraces Mrs. Hooper. Together the two women cry a little. Old Miss unpins and removes her shawl. She sits down in a red plush rocker.

"This is the chair Martha sent me for Christmas," she says.

"Very genteel," remarks Mrs. Hooper. "I have been to the Academy." She changes the conversation. "Belle is there, of course. She asked me to come on here to stay with you. She proposes to remain all day with Mrs. Menckel. There are so many people coming and going. Some one must answer the door, receive people, and attend to the telephone."

"Ah, the telephone . . ." Old Miss's voice trails off. She is half-voicing a train of thought suggested by the mention of the telephone, the symbol of change, new things, incomprehensible times. "A telephone at the Academy . . . !"

"I saw Sis Lester, too. Strange to say, for once she wasn't in tears. She says her pa is much better and able to be downstairs again after his pneumonia. It's a wonder he pulled through it."

The day passes in mutual consolation, recollections, reminiscences. Old Miss and Rosa Hooper recount the past with melancholy pleasure. Sometimes they weep a little, sometimes smile and laugh at some happy or amusing remembrance.

Toward the middle of the afternoon the March sunshine weakens, the sky becomes overcast with a gray film of cloud, and the dark begins to creep over the country. Miss Belle returns from her sad duties about the coffin of Mr. Menckel. She is worn out. Her eyes are red with weeping.

"Dear Miss Brownall," she says, choking . . . "Mr. Menckel was like a very close member of our family. He lived here so many years. Then always close by at the Academy . . . and married to a cousin, too. I can't believe he is gone from us for ever——" She breaks into fresh weeping. "I have wept all day," she says.

Mrs. Hooper weeps too. She puts on her hat and

coat to depart. "Will Dr. Tissert be able to conduct the funeral?" she asks.

"Dorothy Tissert was in and out all day, doing what she could to help," replies Miss Belle. "She says her father is determined to conduct the services for Mr. Menckel. He is very, very feeble this spring. But his determination is marvellous. Some day he'll snap."

Mrs. Hooper departs. Miss Belle takes off her wraps. She hands her mother two or three letters. "I called for these at the post-office," she says. "Don't you think Maria could make us a cup of tea? I feel entirely worn out with all that I have had to go through to-day."

Old Miss opens her letters. One from Martha. Nothing of consequence. The eldest Rudd girl's engagement is postponed again. Martha hopes it will eventually come to nothing. The young man is not promising as a business success.

A business letter about real-estate investments. Old Miss glances through it. She can't understand what it is about. She folds it up and slips it again in the envelope. "I must send it to Charles," she murmurs to herself.

"But here is a letter from Charles himself. Miss reads it through. She reads it again. The long sentences are trying to explain something. . . . "Edward and I think" . . . "the best policy now . . ." "the unforeseen catastrophe . . ." Old Miss blinks at the sheet of paper. Something wrong with the investments . . . well, Charles and Edward will doubtless be able to set it right again. At the end of the letter: "Expect me on the nineteenth."

"Belle, do pray read this letter from your brother Charlie. I can't understand it. There seems to be some business he must attend to, so he is coming on to see us. . . . Is that what he says? On the nineteenth?"

Miss Belle holds the letter in the pool of light cast by the oil lamp over the table. She reads and reads. The

corners of her mouth grow tighter and tighter. Once she brushes her hand across her eyes.

"Yes, Ma, that is what he says. He will be here on the nineteenth."

Charles Rudd arrives true to his word. He is very bluff and hearty. He rubs the palms of his hands together a great deal. He arrives late one afternoon. The evening is spent in telling his mother-in-law everything he can think of about his family. She broaches business once or twice, but unsuccessfully.

"No, ma'am, not to-night," says Dr. Rudd. "To-morrow. I must go over town to-morrow and see one or two gentlemen. Then we'll talk business."

"Well, I really would like to comprehend what brought you all the way from Georgia, Charles. It must be quite important."

"Some things require personal attention. They cannot be arranged from a distance. This is one of them," says Dr. Rudd vaguely, fencing.

Noon. Dr. Rudd is back at Waverley from his business in the town. He seems agitated. Pale. He calls Miss Belle into the office.

"Now, Belle," he says, "sit down and let me talk to you."

Miss Belle takes the seat he indicates. She waits for him to begin. She feels somewhat uneasy.

"There is no use trying to hide the matter any longer. Edward and I are both deeply grieved and distressed that the investments should have turned out so badly. Now, listen to me. I want to make you understand how things are so that you can explain them to your mother."

"Hadn't you better do that yourself, Charlie? After all, I know nothing about the estate. Ma has always managed it. She knows about the investments. And they are hers, anyway. You had much better talk to her."

"No, I want to talk to you. It is a hard matter to explain at best. I don't want to run the risk of giving your mother too severe a shock——"

"Shock? Then, something very unfortunate——"

"Very. I must tell you. The investments have utterly failed. I am sorry. We did the best we could It cannot be helped."

"But there must be something left. Surely Ma's income will continue. . . . We must live, you know——"

"Yes, I know, I know." Dr. Rudd is somewhat impatient. He is also very nervous. "But we must arrange something. Frankly, Belle, your mother's estate is ruined. Her property consists now merely of this house and the few acres left of the plantation. I am afraid it will have to be sold. Your brother-in-law and I are willing to have you and your Ma make your home with us alternately, six months in Indiana and the other six in Georgia."

"I can't believe it!" exclaims Miss Belle. "Surely there is something left . . . all Uncle James Steppleton's money . . . and the price of the land . . . and what little my father left . . .?"

Dr. Rudd is impatient, irritable. "I tell you there is nothing left. It is all gone. We are very sorry, of course we——"

"But to sell Waverley—our home——! It will kill Old Miss."

"Well, there's no use arguing about it. It is the only thing to be done. You have got to live, of course!"

"How shall we ever tell Ma!" cries poor Miss Belle.

"That's just why I'm talking to you now," says Dr. Rudd. "I want you to tell her. I—I can't—very well do it——"

The days that follow are lamentable days. Old Miss paces the floor. She groans aloud. All the property gone —lost—the two estates, Steppleton and Tirwell, come

to nothing. Squandered. Lost by war. And the remnant dissipated through insecure investment failures.

"Why did I not die and see the end of this life years ago?" exclaims Old Miss, over and over again. "Why should I live on when my days are done?"

But there is another grief. It is a family quarrel. Both Old Miss and Miss Belle refuse to allow another acre of Waverley to come under the hammer. Dr. Rudd flies into passion. It is the only way to save his face. The rebuke of the two impoverished old ladies living still at Waverley, known to all, is more than he can face with equanimity. Fierce letters arrive from Atlanta. Commands. Threats. Entreaties. Old Miss and her daughter will not move. They will not accede.

Summer comes and the Rudds sulk in the South. Martha will not come to Virginia as is her usual custom. She will force her mother into seeing reason, meaning her husband's point-of-view. The weight of the years and sorrow bow down the form of the mistress of Waverley. She rarely speaks, but sits in her chair staring out of the window, staring, staring. . . . The end of a long life . . . the latter years a dull sequence of time . . . mere existence . . .

August. Judith finds her mistress seated in her chair. But she does not speak nor show any signs of consciousness.

Just before the end . . .

Mrs. Rudd is telegraphed for. And Lotty Rayfield.

Like a figure of wax, Old Miss lies on her four-poster. She barely breathes. Her pulse flutters feebly. Straight out she lies, the lines of her body scarcely discernible under the covers. Lifeless she seems already, so frail, so ancient and worn. Her thin gray hair is drawn back under a white lawn cap. Her eyes are closed. Her face

is like ivory delicately chiselled. How white the pillow is beside her skin!

The doctor is just leaving. He turns to speak to Mrs. Rudd and Miss Belle. "Very peaceful," he says. "She'll slip away easily any minute. Nothing more I can do."

The August afternoon is stifling hot. Not a breath of air stirs the crape-myrtles outside the window. In the syringas a catbird complains and quarrels lazily. The blinds of the bedchamber window are partly drawn.

Old Miss is dying. The pallor of death lies on her face. The criss-crossing lines and wrinkles of old age and grief and care are smoothing out. Old Miss is leaving the world . . . not long now; to-day, to-morrow. For several days she has been moving toward the end. Eighty years old she is . . . a long time to live . . . many years after the logical term of her interest and pleasure in life, the end of the great Civil War, the death of her husband. But now, at last, the life is fleeting, separating from the waxen body.

So still she lies, so remote from the world. And her soul . . . is gone. . . .

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